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CONTENTS

Notes on contributors xiii
Preface xx

PART I
History of aesthetics **1**

1 Plato **3**
CHRISTOPHER JANAWAY

2 Aristotle **13**
NICKOLAS PAPPAS

3 Medieval aesthetics **25**
JOHN HALDANE

4 Empiricism: Hutcheson and Hume **36**
JAMES SHELLEY

5 Kant **46**
DONALD W. CRAWFORD

6 Hegel **56**
MICHAEL INWOOD

7 Idealism: Schopenhauer, Schiller and Schelling **66**
DALE JACQUETTE

8 Nietzsche **77**
RUBEN BERRIOS AND AARON RIDLEY

9 Formalism **87**
NOËL CARROLL

10 Pragmatism **96**
RICHARD SHUSTERMAN

11 Expressivism: Croce and Collingwood **106**
GORDON GRAHAM

12 Heidegger **116**
THOMAS E. WARTENBERG

13 Phenomenology: Merleau-Ponty and Sartre **126**
ADRIENNE DENGERINK CHAPLIN

14 Adorno **137**
THEODORE GRACYK

15 Benjamin **148**
MARTIN DONOUGHO

16 Foucault **159**
ROBERT WICKS

17 Postmodernism: Barthes and Derrida **170**
DAVID NOVITZ

18 Goodman **179**
JENEFER ROBINSON

19 Sibley **190**
COLIN LYAS

20 Wollheim **200**
DEREK MATRAVERS

PART II
Aesthetic theory **211**

21 Definitions of art **213**
STEPHEN DAVIES

22 Categories of art **224**
DAVID DAVIES

23 Ontology of art **235**
GUY ROHRBAUGH

24 The aesthetic **246**
JAMES SHELLEY

25 Taste **257**
CAROLYN KORSMEYER

26 Aesthetic universals **267**
DENIS DUTTON

27 Art and evolution **278**
MOHAN MATTHEN

28 Value of art **289**
MATTHEW KIERAN

29 Beauty **299**
RAFAEL DE CLERCQ

30 Interpretation 309
ROBERT STECKER

31 Imagination and make-believe 320
GREGORY CURRIE AND ANNA ICHINO

32 Fiction 330
DAVID DAVIES

33 Narrative 340
PAISLEY LIVINGSTON

34 Metaphor 351
GARRY L. HAGBERG

35 Depiction 362
CATHARINE ABELL

PART III
Issues and challenges 373

36 Criticism 375
JONATHAN GILMORE

37 Art and knowledge 384
EILEEN JOHN

38 Art and ethics 394
BERYS GAUT

39 Art, expression and emotion 404
DEREK MATRAVERS

40 Tragedy 415
ALEX NEILL

41 Humor 425
TED COHEN

42 Creativity 432
MARGARET A. BODEN

43 Style 442
AARON MESKIN

44 Authenticity in performance 452
JAMES O. YOUNG

45 Fakes and forgeries 462
NAN STALNAKER

46 High art versus low art 473
JOHN A. FISHER

47 Environmental aesthetics **485**
ALLEN CARLSON

48 Feminist aesthetics **499**
KAREN HANSON

49 Art and religion **509**
GORDON GRAHAM

PART IV
The individual arts **519**

50 Literature **521**
PETER LAMARQUE

51 Poetry **532**
PETER LAMARQUE

52 Theater **543**
JAMES R. HAMILTON

53 Film **554**
MURRAY SMITH

54 Videogames **565**
GRANT TAVINOR

55 Comics **575**
AARON MESKIN

56 Photography **585**
DAWN M. WILSON

57 Painting **596**
DOMINIC MCIVER LOPES

58 Sculpture **606**
SHERRI IRVIN

59 Design **616**
GLENN PARSONS

60 Architecture **627**
EDWARD WINTERS

61 Music **639**
ANDREW KANIA

62 Dance **649**
GRAHAM MCFEE

Index 661

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PREFACE

You are now looking at the third edition of *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*. That we have attained such a grand age for an anthology is testament to the considerable success of the first (2001) and second (2005) editions, which have been widely used in teaching and consulted by innumerable researchers interested in aesthetics. But if any laurels were on offer for reaching a third edition, we have not rested on them. The first edition comprised forty-six entries, the second fifty-two, and this edition adds a further ten to bring the grand total to sixty-two (we may have to offer a free wheelbarrow with the next edition). In the historical section there are new entries on Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, which further strengthen our coverage of continental aesthetics, and on Richard Wollheim. To the aesthetic theory section are added chapters on categories of art and on art and evolution. In the third section there is a new chapter on art and religion. The final section on the individual arts has new chapters on poetry, videogames, comics and design, reflecting philosophers' increased attention to individual art forms. Almost all the chapters carried over from earlier editions have been revised, many substantially so, to reflect recent developments in the subject, and in some cases we have invited new authors to contribute entries. The result is a wide-ranging and up-to-date survey of the rich variety of work being done in philosophical aesthetics.

Both the success of the earlier editions and the need for a new one bear witness to the fact that philosophical aesthetics today is a vibrant field. Thirty or forty years ago, it was not uncommon for philosophers to claim that there was nothing much of philosophical interest to be said about the arts. Nonphilosophers interested in the arts used to complain that contemporary philosophers had indeed said nothing of interest to them. As the painter Barnett Newman quipped, "aesthetics is for artists like ornithology is for the birds." Even at the time, this unhappy convergence of views was badly grounded. Today, it is entirely without justification. Philosophy has rediscovered aesthetics, and this volume bears the fruits of philosophers' newfound interest in art.

Partly this has arisen from philosophers' increased attention to the practice, history and criticism of the individual arts – including literature, music, painting, architecture, film and videogames – and from an awareness that philosophical problems are raised by the particularities of the individual arts. Understanding art as a whole depends on an appreciation of the arts individually and what makes each of

them unique. Some philosophers have begun to write about individual novels, poems, symphonies and films with an attention to detail and a level of insight rivaling that of literary critics, musicologists, art critics and film critics.

Renewed philosophical interest in aesthetics also comes from a recognition that many topics of general philosophical importance – the nature of representation, imagination, emotion and expression, to name a few – cannot be adequately understood unless their roles in the arts and artistic appreciation are examined, for here they find some of their most interesting and complex applications. Interest in aesthetics also gets a boost from increased pluralism within analytic philosophy itself, which has advanced outwards from its heartlands of the philosophy of language and metaphysics to conquer new areas, such as applied ethics, political philosophy, cognitive science and aesthetics.

The present volume is broadly within the tradition of analytic philosophy and shares that tradition's commitment to clarity of expression and precision of argument. It also shares and aspires to advance the increasing pluralism of the analytic approach, and attends to thinkers outside the analytic tradition, showing what analytic aesthetics can learn from them.

The *Companion* provides an introduction to many of the most important topics and thinkers in philosophical aesthetics. As such, it should prove its worth as a textbook for university courses in philosophy of art. It is also a snapshot representing some of the best work being done in aesthetics today. Numbered among its authors are both distinguished senior scholars and outstanding young researchers. We have asked them to provide not just a survey of the area, but also something of their own views. The results will be of interest not just to students of aesthetics, but also to specialists in the area.

The first part of this volume is historical, covering many of the classic writers on aesthetics, as well as some more recent and influential thinkers from within the analytic and continental traditions. Our criterion for inclusion within this section is that the writer's body of work should be substantially complete. Major figures who are still developing their views are discussed elsewhere in the volume, in the chapters dealing with the subjects on which they have written. The second part covers central concepts and theories within aesthetics, dealing with basic issues such as the definition of art, the nature of the aesthetic and the standards of correct interpretation. The third part covers more specific issues, such as art and knowledge and art and emotion, and also examines challenges to traditional aesthetics posed by feminism, environmental aesthetics and popular art. The final part addresses the individual arts of music, painting, photography, film, videogames, comics, literature, poetry, theater, dance, architecture, sculpture and design. The volume works well as a guide to aesthetics approached historically, or by focusing on theories of art and the aesthetic, or by centering on issues in aesthetics, or by examining the individual arts.

While the *Companion* gives a wide-ranging and up-to-date overview of the field, it obviously cannot, within the compass of a single volume, cover everything of interest and importance in aesthetics. Each reader is likely to have his or her own view on what might have been usefully included, and we would probably agree with many of these suggestions. Nevertheless, the volume captures the sheer diversity, liveliness and interest of current aesthetics. Instead of short dictionary-style entries, we have

asked our authors to produce chapters of around 5,000 words each – long enough to explore the debates about their topic in some detail, but short enough to be read at one sitting, and to allow for a wide range of articles within a single volume. Each chapter has cross-references to other chapters which are germane to the topic, a list of references to works discussed and, where useful, suggestions for further reading. The reader will thus find plenty of scope for following up points of interest in any of the topics covered. The *Companion* might well be viewed as an invitation to aesthetics.

When the credits roll, they should list more than the names of the contributors and editors. We are grateful to all those who have had a hand in the publication of this volume: To our contributors, for their enthusiasm and their ability to produce work of high quality within tight deadlines and tighter word limits, some putting up with our demands through several editions. To the many scholars we consulted in the course of planning the volume, including those who told us not to do it (we enjoy being proven right). To those who wrote reviews of the earlier editions – we have (usually) taken their criticisms constructively (though they may not believe it if they review the third edition). To Tony Bruce and his team at Routledge, for their unstinting enthusiasm and support for the volume, not once but thrice over.

Berys Gaut
Dominic McIver Lopes

Part I

HISTORY OF AESTHETICS

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1
PLATO

Christopher Janaway

Plato's writings about the arts play a foundational role in the history of aesthetics, not simply because they are the earliest substantial contribution to the subject. The arts are a central, rather than a marginal topic for Plato, and for him the whole of culture must reflect and inculcate the values that concern him. His philosophy of art (as we would call it) is closely integrated with his metaphysics, ethics and politics. From a modern point of view two features are perhaps most striking. First, the arguments Plato gives to the characters in his dialogues contest the autonomous value that we might expect from what we call art, and in the most prominent cases refuse it such value altogether. For Plato the philosophical task is to uncover a metaphysical and ethical order to the world, and the arts can have true worth only if they correctly represent this order or help in aligning us with it. Yet at the same Plato the author often proceeds in an artistic manner: his language and imagery are frequently beautiful and expressive, he writes elaborate myths, and distances himself in sophisticated ways from the dramatic characters he portrays. Long ago Sir Philip Sidney called Plato "of all philosophers … the most poetical" (Sidney 1973: 107), to emphasize the urgency of understanding why he portrays poetry in such an antagonistic fashion. We shall examine in outline the major issues that a reading of Plato is likely to raise for modern aesthetics.

The arts in *Republic* 2 and 3

In the *Republic* Plato has his character Socrates construct a picture of the ideally just individual and the ideally just city state, in which he gives an account of the nature of knowledge and education, culminating in the proposal that the rulers of the ideal state would be philosophers, those uniquely in possession of methods for attaining knowledge of the eternally existing Forms that constitute absolute values in Plato's universe. Quite early in the discussion Socrates considers the role of the arts in education. The young, especially those who will be the Guardians responsible for the city's well-being, must receive an education that properly forms their characters. Since the young soul is impressionable and will be molded by any material that comes its way, the productive arts and crafts will be regulated so that they pursue "what is fine and graceful in their work, so that our young people will live in a

healthy place and be benefited on all sides, and so that something of those fine works will strike their eyes and ears like a breeze that brings health from a good place, leading them unwittingly, from childhood on, to resemblance, friendship, and harmony with the beauty of reason" (*Republic* 401c–d).

Much of Books 2 and 3 concerns the scenes and characters poetry contains. Plato assumes that fictional tales and poetic representations will play a dominant role in education – a conventional assumption, as we see from remarks in the dialogue *Protagoras*: "they are given the works of good poets to read at their desks and have to learn them by heart, works that contain numerous exhortations, many passages describing in glowing terms good men of old, so that the child is inspired to imitate them and become like them" (*Protagoras* 325e–326a). But it is not sufficient that the young read the works of "good poets." While Plato consistently praises Homer as a fine poet, in the *Republic* he proposes ruthless censorship of Homer's works. Gods and heroes must not be represented as cowardly, despairing, deceitful, ruled by their appetites, or committing crimes: hence the excision of many well-known scenes from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. A good fiction is one which (though false or invented) correctly represents reality and impresses a good character on its audience. Plato seems untroubled by the thought that an accurate representation of the way human beings behave in battle or in love could fail to impress the best character on its recipients. Is truthful representation or ethical effect the higher criterion? At one point Plato suggests it is the latter: some violent mythical tales are not true, and should not be told to the young *even if they were* (*Republic* 378a).

The other main topic for discussion is mimesis, which here should be taken as impersonation or dramatic characterization. There are two modes of poetic discourse: one where the poet "speaks in his own voice," the other (mimesis) where he "hides himself," "makes his language as like as possible to that of whatever person he has told us is about to speak," and – at the beginning of the *Iliad* – "tries … to make us think that the speaker is not Homer, but the priest, an old man" (393a–c). Hiding oneself behind a pretend character is implicitly deceitful and dubious. But Plato's objection to mimesis here is more sophisticated. He claims that to enact a dramatic part by making oneself resemble some character (and perhaps even to be the composer of a drama in which diverse persons appear; see Burnyeat 1999: 270–72) causes one to become like such persons in real life. Given a prior argument that all members of the ideal community, and a fortiori its Guardians, should be specialists who exercise only one role, it follows that the city will produce better Guardians if it restricts the extent to which they indulge in dramatic art. Those whose dominant aim is the production of mimesis are ingenious and versatile individuals, but the ideal state will not tolerate them. The Guardians should use mimesis as little as possible, and be restricted to enacting the parts of noble, self-controlled and virtuous individuals, thus assimilating themselves to the kind of human being the state requires them to become.

The arts in *Republic* 10

Republic Book 10 contains Plato's most prominent criticisms of the arts. Mimesis is the chief topic, but now, arguably, we must understand this term in a different sense, as image-making: making something that is not a real thing, but merely an image of a

thing. Both poets and visual artists are practitioners of mimesis in this sense, but the aim of this passage is to justify the banishment of mimetic poetry from the ideal city. The grounds are that mimesis is far removed from truth, though easy to mistake for the work of someone with knowledge, and that mimetic poetry appeals to an inferior part of the soul and thereby helps to subvert the rule of intellect and reason. While promising cognitive gain, poetry delivers only psychological and ethical damage to individual and community.

Socrates here invokes the theory of Forms to explain the nature of mimesis as such. Whereas an ordinary object, such as a bed, is an "imitation" of the single and ultimately real Form of Bed, a painted picture of a bed is an "imitation" merely of the way some bed would appear from a certain angle. The use of the theory of Forms here is in some respects anomalous. Plato has a god bring Forms into existence, though elsewhere they exist eternally and no one creates them. Earlier in the *Republic* it seemed that philosophers alone have knowledge of Forms; here the ordinary craftsman "looks to the Form" for guidance in constructing a physical bed.

Plato disparages mimesis in the visual arts by comparing it with holding up a mirror in which the world mechanically reproduces itself. The point of the comparison is arguably that the painter makes no real thing, only an image. His product, when compared with the bed and the Form of Bed, is thus at two moves from reality. To make such an image requires no genuine knowledge: no knowledge of the real things of which one makes an image. By a slightly strained analogy, Plato argues that a poet makes only images and is distant from knowledge: "all poetic imitators, beginning with Homer, imitate images of virtue and all the other things they write about and have no grasp of the truth" (600e). They produce only images of human life, and to do so requires no knowledge of the truth about what is good and bad in life. There is moreover no evidence, Plato suggests, of any good poet's manifesting ethical or political competence. Why does it matter that poetic image-making entails no genuine knowledge? Because there are people who hold the opposite view: "they say that if a good poet produces fine poetry, he must have knowledge of the things he writes about, or else he wouldn't be able to produce it at all," on which grounds they claim "poets know all crafts, all human affairs concerned with virtue and vice, and all about the gods as well" (598d–e). Plato aims to refute these claims. Fine poetry consists of image-making, and as such is compatible with the poet's ignorance of truths about what is real.

Plato also undertakes to show which part of the human psyche mimetic poetry appeals to. The higher part of the soul uses reasoning in pursuit of its essential drive to understand the overall good. But the images of mimetic poetry are gratifying to a distinct "inferior" part, which is childish, unruly and emotional, and reacts in an unmeasured fashion to events in real life and in fiction. For example, when someone close to us dies, part of us considers what is for the best and desires restraint in feeling and outward behavior. At the same time another part tends towards indulgence in unbounded lamentation. There is a conflict of attitudes towards the same object, analogous to the phenomenon of visual illusion, where part of the mind calculates that a stick in water is straight, while another part persists in seeing it as bent. Poetry affects us emotionally below the level of rational desire and judgment. The kinds of event that provide the most successful content for mimetic poetry (and tragedy

especially) involve extreme emotions and actions driven by emotion. So mimetic poetry naturally addresses and gratifies the inferior, lamenting part of us and fosters it at the expense of the rational and good-seeking part that should rule in a healthy soul.

Plato's "most serious charge" against mimetic poetry (605c) also concerns its effects on the psyche. It is that "with a few rare exceptions it is able to corrupt even decent people." Plato imagines such a decent person being powerfully affected by the experience of "one of the heroes sorrowing and making a long lamenting speech or singing and beating his breast … we enjoy it, give ourselves up to following it, sympathize with the hero, take his sufferings seriously, and praise as a good poet the one who affects us most in this way." The distancing provided by the artistic context insidiously lulls us into a positive evaluation of responses which we should avoid in real life. We relax our guard and allow the rule of the rational part of ourselves to lapse – "only a few are able to figure out that enjoyment of other people's sufferings is necessarily transferred to our own and that the pitying part, if it is nourished and strengthened on the sufferings of others, won't be easily held in check when we ourselves suffer" (606b). The positive evaluation of our sympathetic feelings for the hero's sufferings rests on the fact that to see them brings us pleasure. So instead of regarding as valuable that which we judge to be best, we begin to value responses that happen to please us, and, Plato argues, this habit can corrode our attachment to the rational and the good in real life.

Plato makes many assumptions here, but perhaps most notable is one that has featured in recent debates about the psychological effects of television and films (for the comparison see Nehamas 1988): that if we enjoy seeing the image of something enacted in a dramatic narrative, this causes in us an increased disposition to act or react similarly in real life. It is as if mimesis is transparent in a particular way: to enjoy or approve of a poetic image of X is not really different from enjoying or approving of X itself. Aristotle's remark in the *Poetics* that the enjoyment of mimesis is both natural for human beings and a source of learning (Aristotle 1987: 34) is the beginning of a reply to this assumption.

On the grounds that it falsely masquerades as knowledge and is detrimental to the human mind, Plato banishes poetry from his ideal city. We may wonder how much of poetry this affects. At the beginning of the discussion "poetry that is mimetic" is to be excluded, but by the end it appears that all poetry is meant, and the intervening argument seems to tell us that all poetry is indeed mimetic, although Homer and the tragic poets (seen as a single tradition) provide the most focused target. Plato proposes to retain some poetry, namely "hymns to the gods and eulogies to good people" (607a). Given the earlier comments about beauty and grace, these works need not be dull and worthy, but clearly Plato prefers them because they will present a correct ethical view of the world and be a means to instilling the right character in the citizens.

In his concluding remarks Plato mentions an "ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy" (607b). Poetry (of the kind excluded) aims at pleasure and mimesis, but if it can satisfy philosophy by producing an argument that it is beneficial to the community and to human life, then it can reclaim its place. If philosophers hear no such a justification, they will use the argument of *Republic* Book 10 "like an incantation so as to preserve ourselves from slipping back into that childish passion for poetry" (608a).

It is like keeping oneself away from a person one is in love with but with whom an association is not beneficial. This image, and the accompanying invitation to poetry to defend itself, reveal Plato as less authoritarian than he often appears in the *Republic*. He recognizes the power of poetry over the human soul and intimates that he has full appreciation of its pleasures. It is not through insensitivity that Plato rejects pursuit of the pleasures of poetic image-making. It is because he has an argument that shows we should resist these pleasures unless poetry or its lovers perform on philosophy's home ground and present a good counterargument.

Beauty

According to Iris Murdoch, "Plato wants to cut art off from beauty, because he regards beauty as too serious a matter to be commandeered by art" (Murdoch 1977: 17). This may have been difficult for some modern aestheticians to grasp, given widespread assumptions about their discipline (such as Hegel's view that its subject matter is "artistic beauty"; Hegel 1993: 3). Some commentators on Plato have thought, mistakenly, that a positive philosophy of art is implicit in Plato's inspirational passages on the love of beauty as an absolute value.

Plato's concept of beauty is arguably quite different from the modern aesthetic concept, whatever exactly that is. We translate Plato's word *kalon* as "beautiful," but a preferable translation in many contexts is "fine." Definitions and examples from the Platonic dialogue *Hippias Major* illuminate the broad application of *kalon*: a fine girl is fine, so is anything made of gold, so is living a rich and healthy life and giving your parents a decent burial. Here even the first two may not be cases of beauty in what we might call a purely aesthetic sense: desirability and exchange value play a part in their fineness. Another aspect of fineness is "what is pleasing through hearing and sight": "Men, when they're fine anyway – and everything decorative, pictures and sculptures – these all delight us when we see them, if they're fine. Fine sounds and music altogether, and speeches and storytelling have the same effect" (*Hippias Major* 298a). This looks like a rudimentary definition of the aesthetically pleasing. But it neither embraces the whole range of *kalon* nor lends the arts a value that rescues them from the critique of the *Republic*.

Beauty finds its most significant treatment in the dialogue *Symposium*, in the speech by Socrates, which he presents as the teaching of the wise woman, Diotima. Despite this double-nesting of narrators, the speech is commonly seen as revealing Plato's own philosophical views. The whole dialogue concerns the nature of love. In Socrates's account beauty is love's highest object. To grasp this, we must make a Platonic metaphysical distinction between, on the one hand, the beauty of things and properties as they occur in the sensible world and, on the other, The Beautiful Itself – as Plato calls the eternal, unchanging and divine Form of Beauty, accessible not to the senses, but only to the intellect (*Symposium* 211d). Instances of beauty in the sensible world exhibit variability or relativity: something is beautiful at one time, not at another, in one respect or relation, not in another, to one observer, not to another. The Beautiful Itself lacks all such variability, it "always *is* and neither comes to be nor passes away, neither waxes nor wanes' (211a). This passage may be taken to imply that the Form of Beauty is itself beautiful. That reading seems to make sense of Beauty's

being an object of love on a continuum with other such objects, though whether Plato thinks of Beauty as "being beautiful" in the same way as a boy or girl is beautiful is a matter of debate.

Elsewhere Plato describes nonphilosophers as unable to grasp that there is a single unvarying Form of Beauty. The sophist Hippias equates beauty with a beautiful girl and then with the property of being made of gold. But a girl is beautiful in one relation (to other girls), not in another (to goddesses), and being made of gold makes some things beautiful, but not others: the eyes of a statue, for instance, would be repulsive if fashioned from gold. So it looks to Plato as if no object or property accessible to the senses can be what constitutes beauty as such. A similar distinction occurs in the *Republic*, where Plato disparages "lovers of sights and sounds" (475d–476b) who eagerly attend arts festivals, but think there are "many beautifuls" rather than the single Form of the Beautiful that the philosopher recognizes.

In the *Symposium* the ideal lover is portrayed as ascending through a hierarchy of love objects – first the beautiful body of a particular human beloved, then all beautiful bodies equally, then the beauty of souls, then that of laws, customs and ideas – and ending as a lover of wisdom or philosopher. At the culmination of his progress the philosophical lover will "catch sight of something wonderfully beautiful in nature … the reason for all his earlier labors" (210e), namely the Form of Beauty itself. ("Fineness" here will hardly convey the requisite fervor.) All love desires some kind of offspring. The highest form of love catches hold of a superior object and produces a superior offspring: "if someone got to see the Beautiful, absolute, pure, unmixed, not polluted by human flesh or colors or any other great nonsense of mortality … only then will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue (because he's in touch with no images), but to true virtue (because he is in touch with the true beauty)" (211e–212a).

If we recall that in the *Republic* Plato applies the phrase "images of virtue" to poets, a contrast suggests itself. While the poet makes only images, and understands only images, the philosopher, who strives for and encounters the eternal unchanging Beauty, can bring genuine goods into the world because he understands what virtue is. This contrast can be hard to accept for the modern reader, because Plato's own literary genius is fully manifest in this extraordinary and moving passage, and because we imagine that he must find a place in his hierarchy of beauties for something like art, or at least think that art enables its author to produce something immortal and universal. "Strangely enough," one historian of aesthetics has written, "Diotima and Socrates do not assign a role to the arts in this process of reawakening to Beauty, though it takes but a short step to do so" (Beardsley 1966: 41). But this is an anachronistic reaction. It is more likely that Plato's next step comprises the arguments he gives to Socrates in the *Republic*, probably written shortly afterwards.

Inspiration

In the short early dialogue *Ion* Plato has Socrates say that poets are divinely inspired to produce their fine works. The character Ion is a rhapsode, a professional reciter of poetry and a critic or expert on Homer. Socrates undertakes a demolition of Ion's claim that he succeeds as performer and critic because he has knowledge. An

important concept in this dialogue is *technê*. The word has been translated as "craft," "skill" or "expert knowledge." Plato regards doctors, generals and mathematicians as each possessing a *technê*, meaning that they are knowledgeable about a specific subject matter, can transmit their knowledge in teaching, understand general principles or rules that apply across all instances within their field, and can give a rational account of why their practice succeeds. A further criterion of *technê*, offered in the dialogue *Gorgias*, is that it aims at the good and is based in knowledge of the good (*Gorgias* 463a–465a).

An antique translation for *technê* is "art," but examination of this concept will not yield Plato's "philosophy of art," chiefly because practices we regard as "artistic" tend to be denied the status of *technê*. In the *Gorgias* persuasive rhetoric, tragedy and musical performances by choruses or instrumentalists all fail to be cases of *technê*, because their aim is not to make their audiences better, but to gratify them. Plato argues that there are no principles concerning what pleases a mass audience, and that it is by guesswork that these practices succeed, rather than by rational principle or knowledge. The *Ion* takes a similar line: the rhapsode discerns what is fine and pleasing in Homer's poetry, but in so doing he works to no generalizable principles. And there is no subject matter on which he is an expert solely in virtue of being a rhapsode and being familiar with Homer's fine work. Ion's preposterous claim to be an expert on "everything," because Homer writes finely of everything, prefigures the superficially more plausible claim, rejected in the *Republic*, about the knowledge of the poet himself.

How is it then that Ion succeeds in discerning the fineness in Homer's poetry and performing it so brilliantly as to delight his audiences? Socrates' answer is itself poetic, or perhaps mock poetic: "the poets tell us that they gather songs at honey-flowing springs, from glades and gardens of the Muses, and that they bear songs to us as bees carry honey, flying like bees. And what they say is true. For a poet is an airy thing, winged and holy, and he is not able to make poetry until he becomes inspired and goes out of his mind and his intellect is no longer with him" (*Ion* 534a–b). The power of poetry is divine: the Muse attracts the poet, who is then a mouthpiece through which the divine speaks. The performer succumbs to the same attraction and transmits it to the audience. But at no stage does rational thought or expert competence account for the success of the proceedings. There seems to be a mixed message here: Ion is admirable and even (if ironically) "divine." But he deserves no credit for his artistic success, because he is "out of his mind." Not only can he give no rational account of why he succeeds, he is also, Plato assumes, irrational in responding emotionally to the dramatic scene he performs, despite that scene's unreality.

The *Ion* may surprise us because although it locates features regarded in the modern era as characterizing the "artistic," it rates them disparagingly, or at best equivocally. The later work *Phaedrus*, a literary masterpiece which explores the nature of rhetoric, writing, love, beauty, Forms and the philosophical life, promises a more openly positive account of the inspiration of poets. Here Socrates praises "madness," explicitly including the state of mind in which good poets compose, "a Bacchic frenzy" without which there is no true poetry: "If anyone comes to the gates of poetry and expects to become an adequate poet by acquiring expert knowledge

[*technê*] … he will fail, and his self-controlled verses will be eclipsed by poetry of men who have been driven out of their minds" (*Phaedrus* 245a).

It has been claimed that the *Phaedrus* marks Plato's recantation of the hard-line condemnation of poetry in the *Republic* (Nussbaum 1986: 200–33), but a more sober verdict is perhaps better supported. Part of the extravagant myth Socrates enunciates concerns the fate of reincarnated souls, who are placed in rank order. The highest, most worthy soul is that of "a lover of wisdom or of beauty … cultivated in the arts [*mousikos*] and prone to erotic love" (248d). Sixth in rank, lower than generals, politicians, gymnasts, doctors and prophets, is "a poet or some other life from among those concerned with mimesis" (248e). The contrast tests the modern reader's intuitions. Surely the prime rank must go to the genuine artist, while some poor uninspired dabbler is relegated to the sixth? Yet there is no word for "art" here, as Nehamas reminds us: "the 'musical' … is not the artist, but the gentleman who patronizes the artists and knows what to take from them" (Nehamas 1982: 60). The first-ranking soul is rather that of the cultured philosopher and lover, with whom poets, all mimetic poets, including the great Homer, cannot compete. The comparative evaluation of the *Republic* is echoed in a very different tone of voice, but it is not reversed.

Philosophy and art

Although Plato writes of a "quarrel between philosophy and poetry" (*Republic* 607b) as already something ancient, he is often seen as the chief instigator of such an opposition. When Arthur Danto writes that "from the perspective of philosophy *art* is a danger and aesthetics the agency for dealing with it" (Danto 1986: 13), he is implicitly treating Plato as the founder of philosophical aesthetics and generalizing Plato's strategy to the whole subsequent discipline. The story is akin to that in Nietzsche's influential *The Birth of Tragedy*, where the cultural force embodied in Socrates, the "theoretical man" and antithesis of the artist, destroys the artistic spirit that once dwelt in tragedy but has remained lost to the modern world (Nietzsche 1999: 60–75).

There is something in the thought that Plato's endeavor is to establish philosophy in opposition to the prevailing culture that not only prizes the arts but adopts certain ill-thought-out theoretical views concerning their value. It is a culture of sophists, rhetoricians, performers and connoisseurs who advocate the educational value of poetry, but who lack a genuine conception of knowledge and any proper grasp on the distinction between what is fine because it brings pleasure and what is genuinely good or beneficial. Without the rigor of philosophical thinking, this culture lacks the critical distance required to assess the true value of the arts. Yet Plato's response is not merely that of head-on dialectical confrontation. He realizes that the art-loving, pleasure-seeking soul in all of us must be charmed and enticed towards the philosophical life. To supplant tragedy and Homer he uses rhetoric, myth, wordplay, poetic metaphor and dramatic characterization. Socrates in the dialogues is an image or invention of Plato's, who enacts for us the life and style of the ideal philosophical thinker. So if Plato is the most poetical of philosophers, it is in the service of leading us, by poetry's means of persuasion, to philosophy proper, a place from which we may begin to understand and evaluate poetry and all the arts.

That the quarrel between philosophy and poetry plays itself out within Plato is one source of the belief that he himself provides the material for a defense of art. In the history of aesthetics there have been numerous attempts to answer Plato on his own ground by claiming that art puts us in touch with the eternal and the absolute, or that it provides a privileged form of knowledge. Others have sought to reject Plato's criteria of evaluation as misguided, and have looked to aesthetic responses of various kinds to secure an autonomous value for art. Some have even combined both approaches (see Schopenhauer 2010: 191–295). But Plato's writings themselves offer none of these resolutions, and for that reason continue to be a unique stimulus to profound questioning about art, philosophy and the relations between them.

See also Aristotle (Chapter 2), Medieval aesthetics (Chapter 3), Value of art (Chapter 28), Beauty (Chapter 29), Depiction (Chapter 35), Art and knowledge (Chapter 37), Art and ethics (Chapter 38), Tragedy (Chapter 40), Creativity (Chapter 42).

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2
ARISTOTLE

Nickolas Pappas

Whether or not we classify any of Aristotle's writings as aesthetics proper, he did produce the first extended philosophical studies of an art form. Most of his works on poetry have long disappeared, leaving the *Poetics* as our only souvenir of his theory of art. So that work has enjoyed an unmatched cultural influence, as writers followed Aristotle's rules for composing poetry, and critics followed his rules for evaluating those writers. Even when both sides distorted the *Poetics*, they learned from its principles, and our idea of art owes that little book a great debt.

Within the history of philosophy, the *Poetics* is noteworthy as a reply to Plato's condemnation of poetry. It makes a textbook case of Aristotle's anti-Platonism: while sharing some assumptions with Plato, Aristotle finds points at which to oppose him, and builds those points into a decisively new theory. This article will focus on the anti-Platonic argument, for at many turns in the *Poetics* we best understand what Aristotle asserts only after determining which Platonic position he means to deny.

The value of the *Poetics* goes beyond its historical significance. It is instructive to watch Aristotle pause from his argument and ruminate on why poetry exists or how it works. He moves from criticism to theory and back. He writes as a philosopher and as a fan. Above all, Aristotle lets actual dramas teach him about drama. His unhurried dissections of tragedy are one more manifestation of his biologist's observant mind, and show how useful such a mind is for the study of art.

The *Poetics*

Aristotle (384–322 BC) wrote the *Poetics* around 335. The extant *Poetics* amounts to the first half, or Book I, of the work that Aristotle wrote, a discussion of tragedy and epic that he followed with Book II (now lost) on comedy.

Like all of Aristotle's surviving writings, the *Poetics* had been his lecture notes and contains the ellipses and digressions that suit oral presentation but frustrate readers. And poor preservation has left the work in messy condition. Only two medieval manuscripts exist that contain the Greek text of the *Poetics*, together with translations into Arabic and Latin. These manuscripts were the result of many stages of recopying by hand, with risk of error; possessing only two versions makes it harder to guess which peculiarities appeared in the manuscript later and which ones in the original.

But the *Poetics* is not incoherent, nor an oddity stuffed with isolated insights. It has a structure and a line of thought and it makes good argumentative sense as long as the reader focuses on some guiding questions: What is poetry? What kind of poetry is tragedy? What are tragedy's essential elements?

The explanation Aristotle provides is a commendation: tragedy not only works, but works well. Tragedy begins with a poet's knowledge, delivers universal statements, and offers the virtuous adult supplementary moral education. For all these reasons, it belongs in the city. Plato wanted to ban it, but then Plato advanced charges against poetry that these Aristotelian claims rebut: that no knowledge undergirds poetry, as poets are ignorant (*Apology* 22b–c, *Ion* 534a) and reliant on inspiration (*Ion* 534b–e, *Phaedrus* 245a), and poetry propagates falsehoods (*Republic* 337–91); that poetry cannot deliver a universal statement, given that it expresses the poet's private mind (*Protagoras* 347c–e) or represents individual dramatic characters (*Republic* 605); that poetry's idiosyncrasy makes it irrational (*Republic* 605c).

The elements of Aristotle's counterargument appear in condensed form in the *Poetics*' definition of tragedy as "the mimesis of a serious and complete action of some magnitude; in language embellished in various ways in its different parts; in dramatic, not narrative form; achieving, through pity and fear, the catharsis of such passions" (*Poetics* 1449b24–28). Four terms in this definition carry special weight, for Aristotle uses them to demonstrate the worth of tragedy: catharsis, mimesis, action and seriousness.

Catharsis of pity and fear

Aristotle offers no theory of catharsis. The word occurs but twice in what survives of the *Poetics*, once enigmatically in the definition of tragedy and once in an irrelevant context (ibid.: 1455b15). For several reasons, however, catharsis has been the center of many readers' attention. 1. Aristotle puts catharsis at the end of his definition, and in general the definition's end is his place for the purpose of a thing. 2. In *Politics* VIII he speaks of the catharsis that music and poetry bring, promising to say more in his work on poetry. Readers assume that work to be the *Poetics* (perhaps they shouldn't). 3. Catharsis has inspired masses of commentary. The history of interpretations of Aristotelian aesthetics is in large part the history of theories of catharsis, so Aristotle's readers should know what the fight is about.

The definition of tragedy refers to the catharsis "of such passions [*pathêmatôn*]," as pity and fear and the like; luckily for the reader Aristotle says somewhat more about those feelings. Pity and fear are aroused by the right presentation of characters and their adventures, a presentation that whips those emotions up to the highest pitch (ibid.: 1453a10). This is why heroes must be decent enough to win a spectator's pity, but not so splendid that misfortune falls upon them undeserved (ibid.: 1452b34–36). Undeserved bad luck would disgust the audience and moral disgust distracts from fear and pity.

Aristotle appears to equate catharsis with the tragic pleasure that pity and fear induce (*Poetics* 1453b11). But here the text is open to divergent readings, for *katharsis* was used in different contexts before Aristotle, and those contexts color the word's

central meaning of "cleaning." A medical catharsis was a *purgation*, a laxative or enema that cleaned out the digestive system; but catharsis in more neutral contexts meant a cleansing or *clarification*.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, Aristotelian catharsis was mainly read as medical. Tragedy flushes out unruly passions, letting them flow freely until we return to an unemotional state. The terror aroused by a well-made tragedy lets us release the thousand little terrors that we normally swallow back down.

The purgation interpretation has ancient origins (e.g. Proclus 1899). *Politics* 1342a6ff. seems to treat catharsis as purgation. In the modern era the purgation view ensconced itself in commentaries until it became the received view (Lear 1988), and it gains some credibility by speaking of emotions as the psychologizing of everyday life does: "you can't keep it bottled up inside."

But Aristotle's ethics call for neither the celebration of passions nor their expurgation: what is best is their regular and well-regulated functioning (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1109a25–29; Nehamas 1992: 296–97).

One recent variant on purgation emphasizes the "such" in "catharsis of such passions" to mean *not* pity and fear and more feelings like them, but rather passions distinct from yet resembling those two (Belfiore 1992). The passions to be flushed away could be deficient or excessive manifestations of the basic sense of shame: shamelessness on one side, extreme scruples on the other. Tragedy provides a shocking blow of fear and pity that overcomes those pathological states and returns the soul to virtuous balance. Rather than expel pity and fear it arouses them so that they can expel other passions.

This is, however, a forced reading of that word "such." "Such passions" as pity and fear might well mean something beyond just those two. But it is unnatural to make the word mean altogether different and even opposed emotions.

Both purgation readings contradict something Aristotle says in *Politics* VIII. Music and poetry help to educate the emotions, for songs contain accurate images of courage and other traits (*Politics* 1340a19–21). These rouse us to emotion (ibid.: 1340a13); delight over the whole experience trains the soul to enjoy the sight of real-world virtue (ibid.: 1340a22–27). This arousal of the audience's emotions recalls what the *Poetics* says about pity and fear. If *their* arousal leads to catharsis (plus delight over the excitement of passions), and *this* arousal brings ethical habituation, then catharsis must be training or habituation, not a flushing out (ibid.: 1339a18–23).

Training emotions presupposes that the emotions are here to stay, and need to be calibrated to fit the real-world situations that call them forth. On this view catharsis is *clarification* (Golden 1976; Nussbaum 1986 – but the view described here is Nussbaum's). By rousing powerful emotions with a simpler train of events than life provides, tragedy teaches how fear and pity feel and where they are appropriate. That understanding forms part of the groundwork for ethical behavior. This is ongoing ethical education for already-virtuous adults.

The view does imply an anti-Platonic argument. The emotions that Plato deplored are granted to exist in tragedy, but they benefit ethical action instead of subverting it. Where Plato gloomily rushed to the conclusion that tragedy's emotions overpower our capacity to reason, Aristotle considers us capable of reasoning about our emotions and of making them more reasonable.

What's more, "catharsis" in Plato means the change from ignorance to knowledge (*Phaedrus* 243a, *Sophist* 230b–d). Can Aristotle be taking over Plato's word to emphasize that the tragedy Plato despises facilitates a learning process he ought to embrace?

One problem with this version of clarification is the *Politics* passage that calls catharsis a "relief," something that makes the soul "settle down" (*Politics* 1342a7–15), as clarification does not do. And this reading might not be cognitive enough. If clarification is enlightenment, this reading fulfills Aristotle's promise to show how poetry brings the pleasure of understanding (*Poetics* 1448b13). But as long as "clarification" specifically means enlightenment about the emotions, the reading falls short of defending poetry against Plato's attacks. A rebuttal to Plato cannot rest with justifying the passions that tragedy arouses, because Plato does not rest with condemning them. He regularly accuses poetry of error without mentioning emotions. Even *Republic* 10 vilifies mimetic poetry as the imitation of appearance; pathological emotions merely compound that effect.

Another view of clarification makes the object of enlightenment something more general about every life's susceptibility to catastrophic error (Golden 1992: 89). Such clarification moves us away from the emotional domain. It still fails to address the *story* in drama, that aspect of a play that most people treat as what the work is about, and that Aristotle himself clearly emphasizes (see below). So some interpreters find catharsis occurring in a different place altogether. When Aristotle's definition of tragedy mentions the catharsis "of such passions," the Greek word *pathêmatôn* refers not to emotions but to the incidents in the drama that arouse them. Catharsis still means the cleaning of *pathêmata*, only that process is narratological not psychological. The incidents get tidied up by being resolved in a denouement to the play (Else 1957; Nehamas 1992). Coherent and significant plot structure is the goal of tragedy.

This view of catharsis remains a minority position. Again Aristotle's words do not naturally mean what the theory needs them to. Nevertheless this reading commendably looks in the *Poetics* for an argument about what literature knows and how it recounts that knowledge; and it directs our attention, as no other version of catharsis does, to events in the plot.

If we seem to have travelled a long way from the "catharsis" of popular lingo, another take on the *Poetics* abandons the idea altogether. On this recently revived proposal, the definition's phrase about catharsis is not Aristotle's language at all but a later insertion that scholars should excise (Petrusevski 1954; Scott 2003; Veloso 2007).

The argument is radical but very much worth considering. Aristotle introduces his definition of tragedy as a compendium of "what has been said" in preceding chapters, yet those chapters have to be tortured to deliver claims about catharsis. In later chapters of the *Poetics* – 6, 14 and 26 – catharsis would have made a fitting part of Aristotle's discussion, but he will not even say the word (Scott 2003: 243–48). Catharsis looks like a corruption of the text introduced in one of the many stages of manual recopying.

Omitting a difficult passage from ancient texts must be a last resort. But one must recall that long unsatisfying history of attempts to make sense of catharsis. The debates over catharsis might be as intractable as they are, and textual support so indirect, because the task is impossible. The time of the last resort might have arrived.

One side effect of lopping the tail off the definition of tragedy is that the definition's focus suddenly shifts (as it did on the plot-resolution reading) to tragic plot. That is a

hopeful sign. Plot, unlike catharsis, is a topic that Aristotle keeps coming back to (Halliwell 1998: 34). And as far as the debate with Plato is concerned, tragic plot promises a way to talk about the knowledge that Plato had denied to tragedy.

Mimesis

The *Poetics* raises the question of knowledge at the start, when speaking of mimesis. Mimesis "is natural to people from childhood" (*Poetics* 1448b6). For Plato, image-making and imitation resemble perversions (*Sophist* 228c, 267c); Aristotle calls them natural propensities. Then he goes further. Mimesis is natural and pleasant because it is a way of learning (*Poetics* 1448b13, 1448b8).

Aristotelian mimesis captures something about acting and drawing, and works that produce resemblances to be discovered. A line drawing can show a thing's contours better than the thing itself; an impersonated Boston accent is easier to learn to identify than the real accent would be. Mimesis brings knowledge by both getting a thing right and simplifying it.

Plato would not accept such instruction. He wants knowledge to come in the form of universal statements. He would not deny that the audience undergoes some process of recognition; he only disdains the particularity of that recognition. The painter's rendition of a bed (*Republic* 597d–598c) fails not because the painter captured nothing about the bed, but because he captured only one look of one bed and lacks knowledge of beds as such.

So far Aristotle has provided only the germ of an answer. Plato might reply: "this just proves that mimesis need not represent particulars, not that (in fact) it does not." Aristotle has to explain why poetry is, often enough to matter, the mimesis of general properties of things. His prefatory remarks will not generate that argument. The definition of tragedy has shown it to be one specific type of mimesis; so something about poetic mimesis, rather than about mimesis *simpliciter*, provides the ingredient that makes poetry "more philosophical than history" (*Poetics* 1451b6–7) – by which he means a source of broader, more theoretical knowledge than history provides.

Mimesis of action

The additional element is Aristotle's proviso that tragedy be the mimesis of an action (*Poetics* 1449b25, 36, 1450a15, 1450b3). He insists on this claim; and though his arguments supply aesthetic (ibid.: 1450a24–29, 35–39) and ethical (ibid.: 1450a16–23) justifications for the primacy of action, his real motive is the argument, against Plato, that mimesis communicates knowledge.

Aristotle's precise assertion is that tragedy represents events not passions, somewhat as painting is more a matter of line than color (ibid.: 1450b2–3). Plot, not character, is the soul of tragedy. Aristotle builds an argument about empirically grounded general descriptions of human behavior:

(1) The mimesis of action amounts to plot.
(2) A good plot therefore clearly represents an action: it restricts itself to a unified action, even at the expense of character development (ibid.: 1450b24, 1451a31–35).

(3) This unity consists in the right connections among the parts of a plot. One event must follow another "either by necessity or probably" (ibid.: 1451a13, 38; 1452a20). A well-made plot is consciously arranged around such causal principles (ibid.: 1455b1–3).
(4) Hence a tragedy that represents action contains a general truth.

How can the unobjectionable premises (1 to 3) add up to such an un-Platonic conclusion (4)?

On one view, Aristotle's argument rests on a new conception of mimesis as an active process of selective presentation (Eden 1982; Halliwell 1998). Mimesis came off shabbily in Plato because he imagined it to be passive. Somewhat as people today might think photography is too easy to be an art, Plato reduced all mimesis to automatic mimicry, even comparing it to the act of holding a mirror up to objects (*Republic* 596d). Aristotle brings the skill back into poetry, as in his remark about plot: "a poet must be a composer of plots rather than of verses, insofar as he is a poet according to representation, and represents actions" (*Poetics* 1451b27–29). The words "composer" and "poet" in this passage are both translations of the Greek word *poiêtês* "maker," and Aristotle half-plays on this literal meaning to tell poets to make their plots. Later he instructs poets to build a tragedy's outline (ibid.: 1455a34–b15). Throughout the *Poetics* he speaks of the *sustasis* "construction" of a plot. From such remarks one may argue that Aristotle emphasizes plot in order to give the poet something to do. A plot is an object that perforce gets constructed (Halliwell 1998: 22). Hence mimesis is active.

Plato does not quite deny this, though. The *Republic*'s analogy to a mirror describes the superficiality of mimesis, not its easiness. The same passage damns poets for misusing their intelligence (*Republic* 605a), with a description of composition that does not sound automatic at all (see *Sophist* 234a on imitators' skill). Plato knows about the selection and arrangement that go into mimesis; far from respecting poetry for this activity, he sees it as more proof of poetry's perversity, that so many do so much to produce so little. The *Republic's* comparisons between poetry and sorcery (601b, 607c; cf. *Sophist* 235a) likewise suggest manipulation and perversity, not the absence of effort.

Moreover, Aristotle himself does not take the poet's activity to suffice for the presentation of general truths. He says tragic poets typically do *not* invent their plots (*Poetics* 1451b15). Thus the merits of good plots must derive from some source besides their having been consciously made up. They have an intrinsically subsisting value – so that even an adherent of the active-mimesis view speaks of artistry as "regulated by the teleological realization of form in matter" (Halliwell 1998: 60).

Anyway, too much plot-making busywork can produce unbelievable and inferior plays (*Poetics* 1454b1). So construction does not invariably yield aesthetic virtue. Aristotle says that poets are not at liberty to change too many details of a traditional story (ibid.: 1453b22). Again the poet's activity becomes secondary in the presentation of a good story, and the story itself eclipses it.

The story itself, not a more complex description of poetic activity, is what Plato overlooked. Plato saw dramatic poetry as the mimesis of persons (*Republic* 393b–c, 395c–d, 396c, 605a, 605c–d). Dramatic characters are individualistic, singular

perspectives on the action in a play, and locating mimesis in them makes it easier to condemn the whole enterprise as particularity-mongering. By emphasizing plot, Aristotle deprives Plato of his crucial antidramatic premise. The *Poetics*' insistence on plot over character therefore sets the stage for a defense of poetry that Plato had not imagined, against which Plato's critique has no purchase.

Some commentators deny that the emphasis on plot makes tragedy wise, on the grounds that Aristotelian mimesis is not the mimesis of universals. The object of mimesis will not elevate the process of depiction to the status of theory, because the action being depicted is still an individual thing.

But even where objects of mimesis are not universals themselves, they may induce a mimesis that *presents* universals. What matters is that the mimesis of an action yields a general statement in a way that the mimesis of a person does not, thanks to the causal principles implied by an action. An inquisitive man like Oedipus hears conflicting tales of his childhood and demands to talk to more witnesses until he knows the truth: this makes sense to spectators because inquisitive people generally respond with curiosity to contradictory stories. That causal principle renders the story plausible and contains the tragedy's general statement. The nature of action is thus the ground for the universal statement in the mimesis, and Aristotle's insistence that mimesis takes action as its object underwrites his conclusion that tragedy communicates theoretical knowledge.

Seriousness

When Aristotle calls the tragic action serious (*spoudaia*), he is partly harking back to his requirement that tragic characters must be *spoudaioi* (serious, superior) people (*Poetics* 1448a2, 1454a17). These characters' dignity and standing ensure the importance of what they undertake and undergo.

Seriousness also means that the action in a tragedy must possess moral significance. This is not a matter of its having a moral. Some popularizations still speak of tragic flaws and heroes' falls, but Aristotle has no such thoughts about tragedy. Poetic justice of that type would ruin the tragic pleasure, since if tragic characters found their misfortunes because of morally blameworthy traits, we would not feel the pity we reserve for victims of undeserved misfortune.

Moral significance means Aristotle does not want tragedy to present meaningless suffering. He calls that variety of the tragic effect disgusting (ibid.: 1452b36), while the appearance of purpose or order strikes him as "fine" (ibid.: 1452a6–10). A tragedy has to make decent people's bad luck the fitting consequence of what they have done, yet not a punishment for their misdeeds.

Aristotle resolves this apparent contradiction by linking the bad consequences to a character's *hamartia* (ibid.: 1453a10). In the New Testament that word means "sin"; in Aristotle's time it embraced a variety of meanings and intensities, from mistake to error of judgment, from folly to self-deception, but not "tragic flaw" (Sherman 1992). A significant mistake (about who one's parents are, in Oedipus's case; in Jason's case, about the damage that Medea was capable of) sets off a train of events ending in misfortune. Tragedy avoids mild manifestations of *hamartia*, for it would count as a repellent display of suffering if a typographical error brought misery.

Minor errors belong to comedy (*Poetics* 1449a34); tragedy pivots on mistakes about momentous facts. But these mistakes do not have to be shards of evil in a character's heart. (In the film *Brazil* a typo brings about considerable misfortune. But then, that film depicts a wholly repellent world.)

Hamartia is another reason why tragic plots need to be fastened together with strong causal connections. A responsible moral agent should know that disasters can have ordinary beginnings, and how one mistake leads to another.

Seriousness of action also means that luck plays a role in tragedy. Most people's lives never contain the possibility that error will landslide into catastrophe; really important trains of events are rare. Thus the tragic hero gets something wrong in a way that ordinary life does not punish. We fortunately do not always face the consequences of our actions. The unfortunate tragic hero does.

By comparison, the gravity of the tragic *characters* is subsidiary to the argument. Having *spoudaioi* characters does defend tragedy against the accusation of triviality. But triviality was not Plato's charge. He knew that tragedy represented fine men and women. This is exactly what he lamented, the sight of such people reduced to shameless misery. Aristotle's interpretations of mimesis and catharsis are what let him answer Plato; for given what he makes of mimesis and catharsis, he can find value in the seriousness of tragedy.

Aristotle and aesthetics

So the *Poetics* contains a coherent argument and shows Aristotle to be a sensitive, sympathetic observer of tragedy. That does not prove that the result belongs with what we know as aesthetics, as opposed to criticism or folk psychology. It is worth closing by pointing out what features of the *Poetics* make it resemble works in modern aesthetics and which differences set it apart. Relevant issues include beauty; the ethical value that Aristotle sees in tragedy; his silence about religion in drama; his silences about its political content and context.

Contemporary aesthetics does not always speak of beauty. Still, Aristotle's elusive treatment of beauty might set him apart from the modern subject. He uses the adjective *kalos* – the closest word to "beautiful" in classical Greek – nineteen times in the *Poetics*, for tragic plots, language and characters. But he never examines the concept; and beauty is a defining criterion for tragedies only once, when Aristotle says they must be neither too short nor too long (*Poetics* 1451a4–15).

This passage appears to assume a definition of beauty in terms of size and proportion (*Metaphysics* 1078a31–b5, *Politics* 1284b8–10). Beauty is a real property of things (*Metaphysics* 1072b32–35; cf. *De motu animalium* 700b26–35). However, the resemblance to Hutcheson's unity-in-variety is slight (Hutcheson 1973). Early modern discussions of beauty mostly took it to be a univocal property. Thus Kant (1987) distinguished between the beautiful and the good on the grounds that the former gets perceived directly, while "good" always means good *for* something, and is evaluated relative to a goal.

For Plato, beauty has the same nature in every instantiation (*Hippias Major* 294b, *Symposium* 211a–b); Aristotle's beauty takes its meaning from the nature of the

beautiful thing in question. His remarks, though occasional, imply a context-dependent conception of beauty. The *Poetics* calls magnitude a necessary condition for beauty, but magnitude is relative to a thing's nature (*Categories* 5b15–29).

More explicitly, the *Rhetoric* holds that a man's beauty changes its meaning as a man ages and performs different functions (*Rhetoric* 1361b7–14). And *Parts of Animals* urges readers to see the beauty of even repellent animals. All living things boast a design suited to the purpose of their sustenance and reproduction, and that is what beauty comes to (*Parts of Animals* 645a23–25).

Because beauty's meaning varies with the purpose of the thing, the concept of beauty generates no conclusions about tragedy; one must put off using the concept until one knows what tragedy is and does. And of course Aristotle sidesteps the modern problems of validating or defending aesthetic judgments, writing the *Poetics* as though these assessments could be made orderly and definite.

Developing a philosophy of art independent of beauty does not make Aristotle a puritan of aesthetic experience. Beauty may not be an initiating concept in his theory, but in dramatic practice it will stand as the final proof that a tragedy accomplished what it set out to do.

Aristotle more often brings the art-wary puritan to mind when he justifies poetry on the grounds of its ethical and pedagogical effects. A good tragedy refines emotions, shows how people act, and pinpoints the errors that destroy lives. Aren't these external grounds for artistic success that distract from a work's intrinsically aesthetic properties?

But most people permit works of art to be morally elevating, even to gain in value by virtue of those ethical effects, as long as the fact that these are works of art is among the causes of the ethical effects. And in this sense Aristotle must be said to recognize the aesthetic status of tragedy. The transmission of general truths in tragedy entails mimesis, a process he associates with the visual, literary and performing arts. Catharsis requires the arousal of pity and fear under special circumstances with special language. The ethical effects of tragedy follow from its artistic effects. For that matter, Aristotle's remark that correctness in poetry differs from correctness in political thinking (*Poetics* 1460b3–15) suggests standards for poetry quite distinct from Plato's moralistic standards.

In other respects, Aristotle omits mention of the very dimensions of tragedy that formalist critics and theorists do; for neither the religious side of tragedy, nor its political meanings, finds a place in his theory. But while these omissions bring Aristotle closer to many classical modern philosophies of art, they leave his favorite literary form underdescribed; and they tell against the reliability of his reports about tragedy.

Religion is the uncontroversial case. Without question Greek drama began life as ritual. Equally without question Aristotle secularizes tragedy, as when he rejects chance from tragic plots in order to minimize divine action in the plays (Halliwell 1998: 107). Aristotle positively sets the tone for later philosophies of art, especially modern ones, that cut art from its religious roots to examine, as it were, only half of the original organism.

Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* – his reappraisal of Greek culture – is grounded in a repudiation of Aristotle on exactly this point. Nietzsche overuses the names

"Dionysus" and "Apollo," but he recognizes that tragedy was bound up with religious worship. Aristotle would have done well to recognize that fact.

But then Nietzsche shares a blind spot with Aristotle that unites both of them with traditional aesthetics. Suspicious of democracy, Aristotle and Nietzsche alike fail to mention either the social context in which tragedy was performed, or the political content, often prodemocratic, of many Athenian tragedies. Here again Aristotle's mighty reputation helped to steer later philosophers of art away from one powerful aspect of art.

More controversies arise when calling Greek tragedy political than in calling it religious. Was it a democratic phenomenon or more generically part of civic life (Rhodes 2003)? How significant are the democratic proceedings that surrounded tragic performances? How many plays really celebrate democracy? Still, it is telling that where Plato situated tragedy in the life of the city and imagined it produced for crowds, Aristotle pictures tragedies as written documents, enjoyed privately by readers (*Poetics* 1450b19). For all his talk of "our" pity and fear, the tragic audience remains vague.

In recent years the *Poetics*' silence about politics and other social specifics has been the subject of debate. On one view Aristotle de-emphasized the civic trappings of tragedy for political purposes, to hide the specially Athenian nature of drama (Hall 1996). More innocently: the way tragedies were staged during his time, with actors' vehicles selected for maximum histrionic effect, skewed Aristotle's understanding of tragedy (Wise 2008; reply by Hanink 2011). We may find much to admire in the universality that Aristotle's account gains in the process (Heath 2009); or, along with these latest critics, lament the simplification of tragedy. The observant mind of the biologist did not notice everything.

Fittingly, these debates keep the *Poetics* central to aesthetics' understanding of itself, forcing the question whether an art form is best studied by inserting it into the social and material particularity it grew in, or abstracted from those circumstances. Even when we wish Aristotle had conducted his inquiry into tragedy differently, we expect it to matter to aesthetics as such that he did not.

See also Plato (Chapter 1), Beauty (Chapter 29), Narrative (Chapter 33), Tragedy (Chapter 40).

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3
MEDIEVAL AESTHETICS

John Haldane

The concept of the aesthetic as it features in contemporary philosophy is a modern one deriving from eighteenth-century philosophical psychology and investigations into judgments of taste. The studies of Hutcheson, Hume and Kant were prompted by the question of how estimations of beauty, though expressing a personal response to nature or art, nevertheless seem to lay claim to truth, or at least are answerable to standards of correctness. Viewed from this perspective, modern aesthetics is a branch of philosophy of mind and theory of value. By contrast, medieval aesthetics may be said to belong to philosophical theology. This difference might suggest that a contemporary reader who is not interested in religious aesthetics has no reason to consider the ideas of medieval writers. This would be a mistake, however, since there are a number of places at which these philosopher-theologians find themselves posing questions and fashioning concepts and arguments that are of broad and enduring interest.

Historical background

The medieval period may be considered to extend for a thousand years from the ending of the western Roman Empire in the fifth century to the beginnings of Renaissance humanism in the fifteenth. We are inclined to see this period, and those preceding and succeeding it (the "ancient" and the "modern"), from the perspective of the West; but it is important to have a broader vision, particularly in order to understand the ways in which beauty and art were thought of, and in the case of the latter practiced. Future years are likely to see greater interest in Greek medieval thought, and given the richness and sophistication of Byzantine art, its aesthetics provides a valuable bridge to that intellectual world.

The first phase of Christianity involved its spread beyond Palestine, its disassociation from Judaism and its persecution within the Roman Empire. In 311, however, the Emperor Galerius issued an edict of toleration, and his successor Constantine the Great followed this in 313 with "the edict of Milan" legalizing Christianity, restoring property and permitting the building of churches. In 325, Constantine underlined the division of the Empire into western and eastern parts by founding a second capital, Nova Roma ("New Rome"), on the site of the eastern town of Byzantium,

which soon came to be known as "Constantinople." In 380 Theodosius the Great, the last man to rule over both halves of the Empire, adopted Christianity as the state religion. By 395 the two parts were politically separated, and in 476, Rome and the western empire fell to Germanic tribes. The eastern empire, meanwhile, continued for a thousand years until the sack of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453.

The classification "early" (476–1000), "high" (1000–1300) and "later" (1300–1453) Middle Ages derives from these "moments" of imperial collapse, but it obscures the diversity of east and west which predated the medieval period, extended through it, and continued to influence intellectual and cultural developments long after it.

Sources of medieval aesthetics

Medieval aesthetics draws on two sources: one conceived of as an embodiment of divine revelation, namely the Bible (particularly the Hebrew books, or "Old Testament"); the other regarded as the product of human wisdom, namely the corpus of Greek and Roman philosophical writings. Immediately, the duality of eastern and western perspectives becomes relevant, in part because what was known of the ancient philosophical writings differed across the Empire, as did the influence of particular texts, and in part because there was a difference in the theological approaches of the Latin and Greek writers of the early period, the "Church Fathers." Those in the Latin West tended (with the notable exceptions of Tertullian and Augustine) to reject philosophy as unnecessary given Christian revelation, and viewed its practice with suspicion, associating it with Roman oppression and intellectual vanity (negative attitudes that re-emerged in the period of the Reformation).

The Eastern Fathers, by contrast, engaged with it and adapted it to their purposes, in part because they inhabited a Greek culture in which philosophy continued to enjoy prestige but also because they discerned theology in the writings of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics. Medieval aesthetics first emerged in the East due to this philosophical orientation, and because it was there that Christian art, architecture and music were first developed out of pre-existing ancient Greek and Near Eastern cultural forms.

Some Greek Fathers turned to particular philosophies for inspiration, but more often the influence was general as in the case of Clement of Alexandria (150–215) and Basil the Great (329–79). They also looked, of course, to scripture and in particular to those parts (such as Genesis, Wisdom and Psalms) where the cosmos and its creation are described and celebrated. The Greek rendering of the Hebrew Bible uses the terms *kalos* and *pankalia* to speak of beauty, and of the beauty of the created world, respectively. The Hebrew text, however, has a less narrowly aestheticized meaning, suggesting fineness of production or excellence. What can be seen in the patristic commentaries is a fusing of religious and philosophical notions into what would become the standard concepts of medieval aesthetics. Among these is the notion of light as being that which God creates (Genesis), as that which is itself the source of Being and Goodness (Plato, *Republic*, and Plotinus, *Enneads*), and as that by which the beauty of color, texture and structure are revealed.

The following statements are characteristic: Clement: "God is the cause of all that is beautiful" (*Stromata* 5, 14, see Clement of Alexandria 1885); "The best beauty is

spiritual … then bodily beauty, the symmetry of limbs and members and parts, in conjunction with a fair complexion" (*Paedagogus* III, 11) – Basil: "beauty in bodies results from symmetry of parts, and the harmonious appearance of colours … [with light] which has a simple and homogeneous essence, the symmetry is less shown in its parts than in the pleasure and delight at the sight of it"; "God does not judge of the beauty of His work by the charm of the eyes, and He does not form the same idea of beauty that we do. What He esteems beautiful is that which presents in its perfection all the fitness of art" (*Homilia in Hexaem* II and III, see Basil the Great 1895).

Before turning to the Latin West, where over the centuries the most significant developments in medieval aesthetics occurred, it is important to discuss two Greek-minded early figures of enormous importance across the medieval world. The first has already been mentioned, namely Plotinus (205–70); the second is the originally misidentified Dionysius the Areopagite, who drew heavily upon aspects of the former's metaphysics. Plotinus studied philosophy in Alexandria where he absorbed elements of Platonism, Aristotelianism and Stoicism, but he was also interested in mystical teachings associated with Asia, and later established himself in Rome. His system is based on the idea of a supreme reality: the One. Having neither parts nor attributes it is not *a* being but *Being* itself, from which the being (existence) of beings derives. This fits well with the idea celebrated by Jewish, Islamic and Christian thinkers (especially Maimonides, Avicenna and Aquinas) that when God answers Moses's question "who shall I say that you are?" with the words "I am that I am" (Exodus 3:14) God was asserting that his essence *is* existence.

While neither a Jew nor a Christian, Plotinus had a markedly transcendent and "theological" orientation. He was also strong on poetic imagery, and following Plato he drew an analogy between the role of the ultimate reality and the sun, inasmuch as both are sources of light and life. In fact, light is thought of less as a metaphor than as a manifestation of Being, for the One radiates out through a series of emanations: first as Nous or Intellect, then as the Forms of Plato's metaphysics, then as a universal, animating Soul by which the world of appearance is constituted. Plotinus also follows Plato in identifying a route from lower to higher forms of beauty and thence to the One itself. The source of this is the *Symposium* 210–11 (see Plato 2008; see also Plotinus 1966), where it is said that those who discern and love beauty should proceed from visible beauty in the form of bodies, to the beauty of souls, and to that of laws and constitutions and then, through more abstract structures of thought, to Beauty itself – this being either Being, the One or an immediate manifestation of such.

This route plan for aesthetic transcendence recurs in later authors and was revived in the Renaissance period by members of the Florentine Platonic Academy led by Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) under the patronage of Cosimo de Medici (1389–1464). Although it sounds mystical and abstracted from ordinary experience it is not difficult to see something in this idea of aesthetic ascent. Clearly physical forms may elicit sensual delight, but the language of refined description quickly proceeds from sensual appreciation of bodily beauty to talk of "gracefulness" and "elegance," and these terms are easily transferred to descriptions of human character and thence to products of thought and imagination such as proofs and theories. In an age that is willing to entertain the idea of "a theory of everything" it should not be impossible to suppose that the diversity of beautiful things might be unified by reference to a comprehensive

idea of beauty itself. What Beauty itself might be one may certainly wonder, but wondering about it is exactly what this Neoplatonic tradition recommended as an appropriate response to experiences of beauty.

The great influence of Dionysius is due more to association than to originality, though he does give new emphasis to the search for a transcendental source of beauty. When St Paul visited Athens and spoke on the Areopagus he was rebuffed by most of the philosophers, but the Acts of the Apostles (17:34) records that he made one convert from among this group, namely "Dionysius" (hence "the Areopagite"), who later became the second bishop of Athens. This may have been true; what was false, however, was that this representative of Greek philosophy proceeded to write works of Christian theology, in particular the *Divine Names* (see Pseudo-Dionysius 1987) (*Peri theion onomaton* translated as *De divinis nominibus*), which would prove a foundational source for Western medieval aesthetics. The true author of this work was a fifth- or sixth-century Neoplatonist, probably a Syrian monk, but in consequence of his identification with the biblical figure his writings came to receive reverential treatment. Aquinas, for example, mentions him more than a thousand times.

Where Dionysius develops discussion is in turning the enquiry entirely from experience to a priori speculation and in claiming that the Good (which is also God) is said to be beautiful because it is the *cause* of the beauty of other things in virtue of conceiving and causing the actualization of their natures, i.e. making things of certain sorts whose structure is well ordered and thereby perceived as beautiful. Where the general trend had been to reason from experienced to abstract beauty, Dionysius focuses on an ideal conceived a priori as perfection to which varying degrees of approximations may be found in created forms. Carrying over the theme of light, Dionysius adds the element of due proportion giving the formula that beauty is harmony and light *euharmostia kai aglaia*, which in the Latin *consonantia et claritas* would become a common expression in Western medieval aesthetics. From the perspective of the present day Dionysius seems to add little to Neoplatonic thought, but for the medievals the belief that he belonged to the apostolic period made him a focus of interest and a figure with whom to associate developing theories.

Founders of Western medieval thought: Augustine and Erigena

Before proceeding to the High Middle Ages it is important to say something about the thought of St Augustine (354–430) and about figures of the first renaissance, i.e. the period of Charlemagne (742–814). In terms of influence on Christian thought, Augustine comes behind Jesus and St Paul and ahead of the rest. Beyond the range and profundity of his thought, his standing is due in part to the fact that he mediates between the worlds of the pagan Roman Empire and Western Christianity. Born in present-day Algeria in what was then Roman Africa, Augustine studied the writings of Cicero and other Latin authors and became a follower of Manicheanism and Neoplatonism before converting to Christianity. His first work was "On the Beautiful and the Fitting" (*De pulchro et apto*), but Augustine reports in his *Confessions* (Augustine 1991) that it belonged to his Manichean phase and was lost. What he wrote on aesthetics thereafter is marked in part by the transcendentalism of

Christian Neoplatonism but is also much richer in drawing upon and synthesizing aspects of thought and experience, and in accounting for the ugly as well as the beautiful, the former in terms of *privation* of measure, form and order.

In *On Music* (Augustine 1947) Augustine identifies number and ratio, in particular equality between parts, as compositional principles of various arts, elsewhere explaining that beauty is a congruence of parts with pleasantness of color (*City of God* XXII, 19, see Augustine 1998) while ugliness is a diminishment or absence of appropriate harmony, symmetry and concordance (*On the Nature of the Good* 14–17, Augustine 1953), this being an instance of the general principle that "where measure, form and order are present in a high degree there are great goods. Where they are in a low degree there are small goods; and where they are absent, there is no goodness" (*On the Nature of the Good* 3, Augustine 1953). If this seems rather abstract it should be read in conjunction with his lyrical praise of the glories of nature in the *Confessions* where he writes of "the light shining from above: the sun to serve the day, the moon and the stars to give cheer in the night" and of the glories of the sea and land, of fish, fauna and flora (*Confessions* XXXII), thereby reconnecting the creation aesthetic of scripture, and anticipating the nature aesthetic of later times.

Between the period of Augustine and the High Middle Ages, i.e. from the fall of the western empire to the glory of Western medieval Christendom, came several centuries in which there was little in the way of philosophical or theological reflection. A century after Augustine, Boethius (480–525), a public figure of patrician Roman lineage, set about preserving what he could from the collapsed Roman world, while translating from Greek to Latin the known works of Plato and Aristotle. This made him an important source for later Western writers, but so far as aesthetics is concerned two of his own works are significant. First, and most extensively, his *Consolation of Philosophy* (Boethius 1999). After the Bible this was the most widely read text in the medieval and Renaissance periods. It pursues the classical question of the highest value and sets aside bodily beauty and that of nature as ephemeral. Yet the form of the work is itself a highly crafted dialogue, alternating high prose and verse, and it came to be viewed by Chaucer, Dante and others as a literary masterpiece. Beauty is also discussed in his earlier work *Fundamentals of Music* (Boethius 1989), but there the examples relate to rationally intelligible forms: number and ratio, as these are expressed in musical progressions and harmonies. Boethius provides a fourfold classification of music as relating to the cosmos (*musica mundana*), to body and soul (*musica humana*), to the divine (*musica divina*) and to instrumental form (*musica instrumentalis*). The influence of Pythagorean thought is evident and Boethius was the main source for the medievals' knowledge of Greek musical theory.

Augustine and Boethius were conscious of cultural decline but hoped for a time when Christianity might be synthesized with the best of pagan philosophy to produce a Western renaissance. This intellectual revival began in the court of Charlemagne (Charles the Great) in Aachen where the principal figure was a British scholar, teacher and poet Alcuin of York (735–804). The Carolingian Renaissance was wide ranging, in part recovering the art and learning of classical antiquity but also engaging certain vernacular forms developed by the Germanic tribes that had occupied the territories he ruled. The resulting art and architecture was a synthesis, but so far

as theorizing about art and beauty was concerned the ideas maintained the trajectory previously described. Thus Alcuin writes of beauty of form (*pulchra species*) as pointing to eternal beauty (*pulchritudo aeterna*), adding that while the former pleases the sense, the latter brings true and enduring happiness (*De rhetorica* 46, see Alcuin 1965). Given the belief that scripture is the vehicle of divine revelation, and the emphasis on the Christianization of pagan culture, it is unsurprising that Carolingian writers ranked literature above the visual arts: "Glorifiers of pictures gaze at them, and let us devote our attention to scripture and penetrate secret thoughts" (*Libri Carolini* III, 30, see Charlemagne 1998).

Alcuin brought learning and schooling to the Carolingian court, but its main philosopher was Johannes Scotus Erigena (815–77). Again from the far west (in this case Ireland) he was a Neoplatonist who translated and commented upon the work of Pseudo-Dionysius; but while he endorses those ideas he also prepares the foundation for a new phase in thinking about beauty, in part by emphasizing the importance of wholeness or unity, and thereby of composition of parts; and by introducing, without developing, the idea that the experience of beauty involves, and perhaps requires, an attitude of *disinterest*. The focus of his attention on organic wholes is the world itself: "the beauty of the created world is a wondrous harmony of similar and dissimilar elements, and is made of different kinds of forms" (original Greek, *Periphyseon*; trans., *The Division of Nature* III, 6, see Erigena 1987) but the general holism is applicable at lower levels and in that form it is a feature of modern aesthetics.

Even more so is the theme of disinterest. Writing about the origins of "aesthetic disinterestedness" Jerome Stolnitz maintains that "if any one belief is the common property of modern thought it is that a certain mode of attention is indispensable to and distinctive of the perception of beautiful things," and he adds "[e]ither it does not occur at all in the thought of antiquity, the medieval period and the Renaissance, or if it does, as in Thomas, the allusion is cursory and undeveloped" (Stolnitz 1961: 131). The Aquinas reference (1920) is to a passage in the *Summa Theologiae* (Ia IIae, q. 27, a. 1, *ad* 3, i.e. the first part of the second part, question 27, article 1, reply to third objection) to which I shall return, and what is found there is brief and abstract, as is characteristic of Aquinas's few (but highly interesting) observations about beauty. Erigena, however, who predates him by four centuries, seems to have the issue more directly in view when he contrasts the attitudes of two different characters faced with the same object, a vase, one of whom sees and appreciates its beauty while the other does not. The man whose interests are only in the material or commercial value of things is moved by avarice (*cupiditas*), whereas the man of judgment attends to the form of the vase on its own account and sees its "natural beauty" (*naturarum pulchritudinem*); later Erigena writes, "The sense of sight is abused by those who approach the beauty of visible forms with appetite or desire [*appetunt*]" (*De divisione naturae* IV and V, see Erigena 1995). Evidently this does not offer an analytic account of the aesthetic attitude, nonetheless it is fair to describe it as maintaining that "a certain mode of attention is indispensable to the perception of beautiful things." Admittedly, Erigena does not say it is distinctive of it, but at that stage the idea of a distinctive category of aesthetic experience had not been developed, and the later concept may have a better claim than "disinterestedness" to be the common property of modern thought, and even to be the founding notion of aesthetics as it is now understood.

Medieval aesthetics in the golden age

The practice of art was a source of significant reflection within medieval thought. So far as the representational arts are concerned one matter that occasioned some trouble but led to a fruitful resolution was that of the propriety of religious iconography. This had first been an issue in the East. Some Greek Church Fathers had condemned admiration of statuary of pagan gods but allowed that it was appropriate for paintings to depict Christ and the saints, and for architecture to symbolize creation and to orient the mind of the believer towards heaven. By the eighth century, however, opinion had turned towards the idea that the manufacture and veneration of religious imagery was idolatrous. This was a revival of the ancient Hebrew prohibition on graven images (e.g. Exodus 20:4); and part of the reason for its recurrence may have been political, to ease relations between Christians, Jews and Muslims in the Byzantine world. For a century, the dispute between Eastern iconoclasts and iconophiles went through various phases, and while it constrained religious art it also advanced the representation of nonreligious subjects. In the West, meanwhile, Charlemagne developed a middle position arguing that images are permissible but ought not to be venerated. This partly recapitulated the position advanced two centuries earlier by Pope Gregory the Great (540–604) who had declared that "to venerate a picture is one thing, but to learn through the story of a picture what is to be venerated is another. For what writing presents to the literate, this a picture presents to the unlearned" (*Epistle to Serenus*, see Gregory the Great 1898).

This provided a foundation for more extensive defenses of religious and figurative art, and Romanesque sculpture produced both naturalistic and abstracted depictions of flora and fauna (real and mythological) as well as portraits of biblical figures and later saints. The "Gothic," as it came to be termed in the sixteenth century, was known in its own time as "Frankish work" (*Opus Francigenum*). It allowed for less massive walls, expanses of glass and soaring pinnacles and gave rise to an architecture of the *plan* rather than the *elevation*. The point being that the building, like a living plant, was thought of as growing upwards out of a planted "seed." This led to a focus on the expressive potential of architecture and allowed a vivid demonstration of the Neoplatonist/Dionysian idea that beauty is associated with light. It also led to coloration and gilding of statuary and ornamentation, producing shimmering effects as the changing light filtering through stained glass played across the fluting and folding of forms. The dialectic of thought and art is illustrated by the contrasting attitudes of two Parisian figures: Peter Abelard (1079–1142), who wrote that "The decorations of a chapel should be necessary and not superfluous – no gold or silver – and there should be no graven images," Letter 8 to Heloise (in Abelard 1974), and Abbot Suger (1081–1151) of St Denis, who writes, "The altar of wondrous workmanship and lavish splendor we have ennobled with bas reliefs so admirable in form and matter that some could say 'this surpasses matter'" (*De administratione* XXXIII, Suger 1946).

Music was another aspect of the life of worship, but apart from its role in providing a setting for scripture and prayer (a practice that derived from the East, in which Christians continued the Jewish ritual of chanting the Psalms), it was conceived abstractly as reflecting the numerically ordered harmony of the cosmos – Boethius's *musica mundana*.

The theory of literature was similarly inspired by, and keyed to, scripture. Hugh of St Victor (1096–1141) had produced in his *Didascalicon* (1991), a classification of the arts distinguishing *theoretical*, *practical*, *mechanical* and *logical*, with music falling under the first, architecture under the second, painting and sculpture under the third, and literature, in the form of poetry, under the fourth. For Hugh, poetry was not an art proper but an "appendage" (*appendix atrium*), but other classifications elevated it to an art on its own account. Medieval poetry also addressed secular themes but these classifications were historically oriented and looked to texts from scripture, treating the Bible as a model of literary composition and purpose. This recognized that little of it was poetry per se (*versus*), and so a distinction was drawn within the general category of the "art of words" (*oratio*) between verse and prose. This led to further distinctions between viewing texts from the points of view of literary form, authorial purpose, relation to truth and relation to affective character, i.e. emotion.

As regards the interpretation of religious and other ancient texts, there was a long tradition of distinguishing between allegorical and literal readings. In his *On Christian Doctrine* (1995) Augustine sought to provide believers with a methodology of reading, analogous to that provided by pagan authors under the heading of *rhetoric*. Distinguishing between natural and conventional signs and placing language within the latter he urges the need to further distinguish between what is *said* and what is *signified* at the level of deep meaning, and in pursuing the latter one may come to recognize that the surface form is allegorical, using metaphors and symbols to convey a literal truth. (Something similar was also argued for by the Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides – Moshe ben Maimon, 1135–1204, in his *Guide for the Perplexed* III, Maimonides 1995). Inspired by this, the theory of interpretation was developed more extensively and then applied in the production of literary works, as by Dante (1265–1321) in *La divina commedia*.

Returning to the general account of beauty, and reaching the scholastic period to which the greatest thinkers of later medieval philosophy belong, there is common focus on relationships of form, and of aptness or suitability. The first introduces the notion of the composition of parts, and the second the idea that context and content are also determining factors. In that respect they combine elements of formalism with the aspect of what might be termed "presentationalism," i.e. the theory that the forms in question, or the principle of their organization, present some intelligible aspect of reality. William of Auvergne (1228–49), for example, writes that "the body, when well-formed and properly ordered, derives its beauty from the harmony of its parts, so the soul receives its beauty from the ordered exercise of its powers" (*On Good and Evil*, William of Auvergne 1946) and a work of the same period begun by Alexander of Hales (1185–1245), the *Summa theologica Alexandri*, states that "truth is the disposition of form turned inwards while beauty is the disposition of form turned outwards" (*Summa* II, Alexander of Hales 1924–48).

Light had featured as a major theme in the metaphysics of the English Franciscan Robert Grosseteste (1175–1253) who like many others wrote a commentary on Dionysius's *Divine Names*, but Grosseteste regarded the beauty of light as consisting mostly in the fact that it is by means of this that the beauty of things themselves is made visible: it reveals and further beautifies the beautiful. This applies both to nature and to art. Another Franciscan, Bonaventure (1221–74), emphasized the

beauty of the universe and attributed it to God. Like Plotinus and Dionysius, he was concerned with the mystical and saw in beauty and its association with light a route back from effect to cause; from creation to creator, not simply as an inference but as a journey of the soul to God.

So we arrive at Bonaventure's contemporary, the greatest of the scholastics and greatest Christian thinker since Augustine: Thomas Aquinas (1225–74). His combination of range, rigor and consistency is without compare, but it is achieved in part by abstraction, concision and systematicity. From his first analytical writings he was concerned to develop and apply a metaphysical framework derived, via his teacher Albert the Great (1193–1280), from Aristotle. Central to this are notions of form and matter, actuality and potentiality, essence and existence, and cause and effect. In terms of these he explains nature, identity, difference, change, cognition and value. While he has no treatise on beauty or art there are passing mentions across the range of his writings and specific, be they condensed, treatments in the *Summa Theologiae* and in his commentary on Dionysius's *Divine Names*. In the passage referred to by Stolnitz (Ia, IIae, q. 27, a. 1 *ad* 3), Aquinas (1920) writes as follows:

> The beautiful is the same as the good, and they differ in aspect only. For since good is what all seek, the notion of good is that which calms the desire; while the notion of the beautiful is that which calms the desire by being seen or known. Consequently those senses chiefly regard the beautiful, which are the most cognitive, viz. sight and hearing, as serving reason; for we speak of beautiful sights and beautiful sounds. But in reference to the other objects of the other senses, we do not use the expression "beautiful" for we do not speak of beautiful tastes, and beautiful odors. Thus it is evident that beauty adds to goodness a relation to the cognitive faculty: so that "good" means that which simply pleases the appetite; while the "beautiful" is something pleasant to apprehend.

And earlier at *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 39, a. 8, he writes:

> [B]eauty includes three conditions, *integrity* or *perfection*, since those things which are impaired are by the very fact ugly; due *proportion* or *harmony*; and lastly, *brightness* or *clarity*, whence things are called beautiful which have a bright color.

Putting these together and drawing upon his general metaphysics yields the following. "Good" and "beautiful" differ in sense but not in reference. Objectively speaking they relate to things, primarily natural substances but derivatively artifacts (and by extension to parts and collections of both), which have *natures* in virtue of being quantities of *matter* arranged according to structuring principles, *forms*. The form of a thing determines its proper parts and their proper arrangement (*integrity* and *proportion*) and where this is unimpeded by material defect there is clarity (*brightness*). The metaphysical idea is that since form is determinate its presence should result in an equally determinate, precise nature; but defective matter, and indeed the granularity of matter per se, will compromise this to some degree. Nonetheless, where and

to the extent that form introduces parts and arrangement to matter so it also gives clarity of structure to the entity thereby constituted. Such a condition also comprises its ontological goodness or value. This, however, can also be viewed from the perspective of an agent seeking such a thing with a speculative (e.g. scientific), practical or a contemplative interest. In so far as a nature is an object of enquiry it is conceived in relation to judgments of *truth*; as an object of practical interest it is regarded as *good*; and as a focus of experience it is thought of as *beautiful*.

What else Aquinas and those who followed him have to say about other aspects of beauty and art follow from this core account, which, it should be noted, combines both objective and subjective conditions in the concept of beauty. No later medieval author adds philosophically to this, and the onset of the postmedieval renaissance sees a change from conceptual analysis, metaphysics and epistemology to literary humanism. While Aquinas looks back to Augustine, Dionysius and others mentioned above, his reflections on beauty remain fresh and relevant to the kind of analysis that characterizes modern philosophical aesthetics, and confirm the opening claim that a contemporary reader has reason to consider the ideas of medieval writers.

See also Plato (Chapter 1), Aristotle (Chapter 2), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Beauty (Chapter 29).

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4
EMPIRICISM
Hutcheson and Hume

James Shelley

Modern aesthetics owes its defining concepts – at least the concepts that have preoccupied it most – to the eighteenth century. These are the concepts of art and of the aesthetic. It is true that the term "art" was long in use before then, but it was not until the eighteenth century that the art forms now included in what Paul Oskar Kristeller famously calls "the modern system of the arts" began to be grouped together, and that the term thus became linked with the concept that now governs it (Kristeller 1951). The reverse is true of the concept of the aesthetic: though it was not until the nineteenth century that the term began to be linked, in the English-speaking world at least, with the concept that now governs it, that concept first took on recognizable shape early in the eighteenth century (Stolnitz 1961: 142–43). It is with justice, therefore, that we regard the eighteenth century as the formative period of modern philosophical aesthetics, since it was only then that its defining concepts assumed recognizable form, and only then, therefore, that the modern discipline itself assumed recognizable form.

The writings of eighteenth-century aestheticians thus make a particularly strong claim on the attention of contemporary aestheticians. Their study promises us the kind of self-understanding that only a study of our origins can provide. In particular, a study of the philosophical forces that forged our central concepts promises both to reveal where they are necessary and where arbitrary, and generally to sharpen understanding of them in something like the way that a study of etymologies sharpens understanding of the meanings of words. One caveat must be kept in mind: to say that our central concepts can be recognized in the writings of eighteenth-century aestheticians is not to say that those concepts, and their attendant perplexities, have not undergone change during the past 200 years. Nothing, it seems, impedes our understanding of eighteenth-century aesthetics more than the tendency to read present-day aesthetics into it. We thus find ourselves in a seemingly paradoxical position with respect to our eighteenth-century predecessors: we will not succeed in understanding ourselves without remembering them, but will not succeed in remembering them without first forgetting ourselves.

We owe our concept of the aesthetic particularly to the British aestheticians of the eighteenth century: their theories of taste are the direct forebears of our aesthetic theories. John Locke and the third Earl of Shaftesbury stand as their immediate

influences. Locke, who took no interest in matters of taste himself, provided the empiricist framework within which they worked out their theories. Shaftesbury convinced them of the philosophical interest of the concept of taste, though the vein he worked in was as Neoplatonic as empiricist (Townsend 1991: 350). We may therefore say that eighteenth-century British aestheticians placed Shaftesbury's interest within Locke's framework (Kivy 2003: 23). Their most important works include: Joseph Addison's papers on "Good Taste" and "The Pleasures of the Imagination" from *The Spectator* (Addison 1712), Francis Hutcheson's *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design* (in 2004 [1725]), David Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste" (1985 [1757]), Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1958 [1757, 1759]), Alexander Gerard's *An Essay on Taste* (1963 [1759]), Lord Kames's *Elements of Criticism* (2005 [1762]) and Archibald Alison's *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1812 [1790]). Because a summary of the entire period is not possible here, attention will be confined to the two works that continue to exert the greatest influence: Hutcheson's *Inquiry* and Hume's essay.

Hutcheson

Despite the untidy appearance it presents on a first reading, Hutcheson's *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design* (the first of the two treatises constituting his *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*; Hutcheson 2004) can be viewed as a reasonably unified response to a single question: In virtue of what do objects cause the idea of beauty to arise in the human mind? In virtue of what, putting it less formally, do we find things beautiful? It is among Hutcheson's merits to have grasped that this question will remain unanswered so long as our focus remains fixed strictly on objects, as it had in the rationalist accounts of beauty that were then popular in continental Europe. For the source of the idea of beauty, it seems, lies in us as well as in objects, and Hutcheson, accordingly, treats his question as a compound of two simpler questions: What is the source of the idea of beauty in us? And, what is its source in objects?

Hutcheson's answer to the first question is that it is in virtue of our possession of an "internal sense" that we are capable of receiving the idea of beauty. His answer to the second is that it is in virtue of their possession of "uniformity amidst variety" that objects are capable of giving rise to it. Though both answers continue to be sources of inspiration, the first is of considerably greater historical moment. For in carving out a category of internally sensible ideas, of which the pleasurable idea of beauty is but one; a corresponding category of internally sensible properties, of which the property of beauty is but one; and a corresponding category of internally sensible objects, encompassing both artworks and natural phenomena, Hutcheson fashions the first philosophically sophisticated incarnations of our categories of aesthetic pleasure, aesthetic properties, aesthetic objects and so on. In short – and with important modifications – what was "internally sensible" for Hutcheson has become "aesthetic" for us, and it is on this basis that Hutcheson lays claim to the title of founder of modern philosophical aesthetics.

Hutcheson gives one argument for the sensibility and another for the internality of the power by which we discern beauty. The sensibility of that power follows from the premise that the idea of beauty arises with the immediacy and necessity with which the ideas of the external senses characteristically arise:

> This superior Power of Perception is justly called a Sense, because of its Affinity to the other Senses in this, that the Pleasure does not arise from any Knowledge of Principles, Proportions, Causes, or the Usefulness of the Object; but strikes us at first with the Idea of Beauty … And further, the ideas of Beauty and Harmony, like other sensible Ideas, are necessarily pleasant to us, as well as immediately so; neither can any Resolution of our own, nor any Prospect of Advantage or Disadvantage, vary the Beauty or Deformity of an Object.
>
> (Hutcheson 2004: 25)

To say that the idea of beauty arises *immediately* is to say that we do not discover things to be beautiful by reasoning that they are from any knowledge we might have of "Principles, Proportions, Causes." We are rather struck by the beauty of things, just as we are struck by their colors. To say that the idea of beauty arises *necessarily* is to say that it arises independently of the operations of the will. We can no more decide which things we will find beautiful than we can decide which things we will find blue.

If the power by which we discern beauty is a *sense* in virtue of the immediacy and necessity with which its ideas arise, in virtue of what is it *internal*? Hutcheson's answer is that an internal sense is one whose ideas arise only if certain other ideas have already arisen. Sight is not an internal sense, because the arising of the idea of blue, for instance, does not depend upon the antecedent arising of any other idea. The sense of beauty is internal, by contrast, because the arising of the pleasurable idea of beauty depends "upon the previous Reception and Comparison of various sensible Perceptions … or intellectual ideas, when we find Uniformity … among them" (Hutcheson 2002 [1742]: 16). Another way of putting Hutcheson's idea is to say that, whereas internal senses depend for their objects on the operation of other powers, external senses do not. Hence with respect to internality, the internal sense of beauty is apparently on a par with reason. Until the operation of some other power or powers has placed an object before the mind, there is nothing to reason about and nothing to internally sense. It might be objected that Hutcheson's use of "internal" and "external" is misleading, given that it permits internal powers to operate on both bodily objects and objects of intellect. There is reason to think Hutcheson came to agree with this objection. In his later works, he replaces "internal" with "reflex" or "subsequent" to refer to powers that depend on others for their objects, and "external" with "direct" or "antecedent" to refer to powers that do not (Hutcheson 1747: 12–13, and 1755: 48).

Hutcheson's argument for the internality of the sense of beauty relies on two main observations. One is that some people possess all five external senses, each in perfect working condition, and are yet incapable of taking pleasure in acknowledged objects of beauty (§I, art. x). At the very least, therefore, the power by which we sense

beauty cannot be identified with any known direct or external sense. The second observation is that not all objects of beauty are themselves objects of external sense. Hutcheson notes, for example, that we sometimes report being struck by the beauty of certain particularly economical yet powerful "theorems" or "demonstrated universal truths," such as the propositions of Euclid's geometry or Newton's gravitational principle (§I, art. xi; §III, arts. i, ii, v). But if the sense of beauty can operate on objects which are not themselves objects of external sense, the sense of beauty cannot itself be external.

We may therefore conclude that the power by which we discern beauty combines the immediacy and necessity we associate with the bodily senses with the internality or reflexivity we associate with reason. Putting the conclusion in Hutchesonian terms, we may say that the pleasurable idea of beauty arises only via an internal sense, or, equivalently, the pleasure of beauty is internally sensible.

The equivalence of these two ways of putting Hutcheson's conclusion can seem puzzling. The thesis that the pleasure of beauty is internally sensible, where Hutcheson's "internally sensible" means something like our "aesthetic," may strike us as uninformative. But this is merely an artifact of the ultimate success of Hutcheson's project in fashioning a new category to house the pleasure of beauty. The equivalent thesis that the pleasure of beauty arises via an internal sense, by contrast, may strike us as far-fetched, for it may seem to imply the existence of some as yet undiscovered internal, possibly physical, organ. But "sense" carries no such implication in Hutcheson's *Inquiry*, where it refers merely to the "power of receiving ideas" in response to the "action" of objects upon us ("idea," following Locke's usage, refers to any mental entity that can be the object of consciousness) (§I, arts. i and ix). That some senses depend on (physical) organs for the reception of their ideas is therefore incidental to their classification as senses. To possess the sense of hearing is simply to be capable of receiving the set of ideas we call "sounds" in response to the action of objects suited to give such ideas; to possess the sense of beauty is simply to be capable of receiving the idea we call "the pleasure of beauty" in response to the action of objects suited to give such pleasure.

This characterization of the sense of beauty prompts the question of what quality (or complex of qualities) suits an object to give us the pleasure of beauty – the question, in other words, of the source of the pleasure of beauty in objects. The answer may seem obvious: it may seem that it is in virtue of their possession of the quality of beauty that objects give rise to the pleasure of beauty. Hutcheson rejects this answer not because it is uninformative, but because it is, strictly speaking, false. Following Locke, Hutcheson thinks of the idea of beauty as an idea of a secondary quality, which means that beauty exists as an idea merely, and not as a quality that inheres in objects (§I, art. xvi). Thus Hutcheson's quest for the objective source of beauty can only terminate in the discovery of a quality (or complex of qualities) that causes the idea of beauty, and that is not (strictly speaking) the quality of beauty.

The terminus of Hutcheson's quest, as has been noted, is the discovery of the quality of "uniformity amidst variety," a "compound" of the qualities of uniformity and variety (ibid.: §II, art. iii). Hutcheson's view, contrary to what this may appear to suggest, is not that the pleasure of beauty arises from the proper balance of the opposing qualities of uniformity and variety. It is, rather, that the pleasure of beauty

arises from the simple presence of these two nonopposing, independently variable qualities. The stronger the concentration of each, the stronger the resulting pleasure (ibid.: §II, art. iii). Hutcheson's notions of uniformity and variety, therefore, are somewhat nonstandard: for "uniformity" he sometimes substitutes "order" and "regularity" and he seems generally to regard "variety" as synonymous with "complexity" (ibid.: e.g. §VI, arts. v–ix). Thus Hutcheson's thesis, roughly speaking, is that objects give rise to the pleasure of beauty to the degree they possess complex order. His chief method of establishing this empirical thesis is to assemble a diverse body of beautiful objects – natural scenes (ibid.: §II, art. v), animal bodies (ibid.: §II, arts. vi–x), music (ibid.: §II, art. xiii), architecture (ibid.: §III, art. vii), gardens (ibid.: §III, art. vii), theorems (ibid.: §III, arts. i–v) and the imitative arts of painting, sculpture and literary description (ibid.: §IV, arts. i–ii) – observing of each that it possesses both uniformity and variety in high degree (ibid.: §II, art. iii).

Some have wondered how Hutcheson can possibly countenance such a wide variety of beautiful objects given his view that objects of beauty are objects of sense. Some objects on his list – theorems and the imitative arts in particular – seem importantly unlike the objects we typically think of as sensory (Kivy 1995: 352–55). To such an objection Hutcheson might reply that it overlooks the internality he claims for the sense of beauty. It is not because the external senses are senses but because they are external that the range of objects each can take is limited. It is because each external sense depends upon itself for its own objects that each has a specific kind of object that it can take, whether visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory or tactile. It is because the power of reason is internal, by contrast, that it has no kind of object proper to it and may therefore range over most any. Part of what Hutcheson is claiming, in claiming that the sense of beauty is internal, is that its range of objects is similarly wide.

Hume

Hutcheson seems not to have convinced Hume that uniformity amid variety is the objective cause of the pleasurable idea of beauty. Hume presumes that the objective causes of the sentiment of beauty – particularly literary beauty – are irreducibly many. But Hutcheson did convince Hume that the sentiment of beauty arises via an internal sense, that that sentiment is at least analogous to the idea of a secondary property, and that beauty therefore "is no quality in things themselves" but merely a "sentiment" in "the mind that contemplates them" (Hume 1985: 229–30).

But if beauty is subjective in this way, it seems there can be no standard by which to declare some judgments of beauty right and some wrong – a conclusion that Hume seems to find hardly more tenable than the full-blown objectivism about beauty then prevalent on the Continent. If beauty were a quality in objects, Hume reasons, judgments concerning their beauty would "have a reference to something beyond themselves," namely to "real matter of fact," that is, to the objects themselves, and would therefore be true or false according to presence or absence of beauty in those objects (Hume 1985: 230). Objects themselves would then provide a standard for judging individual tastes – good taste would consist in the ability to perceive

beauty in and only in objects possessing it. Given, however, that beauty is merely a "sentiment" of pleasure excited by the perception of objects, judgments concerning their beauty have "a reference to nothing beyond [themselves]," and are true or false (if either) according merely to the presence or absence of pleasure in the mind that perceives them. It thus appears that there can be no standard of taste, for, assuming that we are capable of detecting the presence or absence of pleasure in our own minds, all judgments of beauty will be true, and all tastes therefore equally sound (Hume 1985: 230).

Hume's project, therefore, is to argue that the subjectivity of beauty is consistent with the existence of a standard. At the basis of Hume's argument is a partition of what might be called "the mechanism of taste" into two stages: a perceptual stage, in which we perceive qualities in objects, and an affective stage, in which we feel the pleasurable sentiments of beauty, or the displeasurable sentiments of "deformity," that arise from our perceptions of those qualities. Because we pass through both stages in arriving at judgments of taste, differences in such judgments will divide into two categories: those arising merely at the latter stage, and which are therefore purely affective, and those arising in the former stage, and which are therefore perceptual in origin. Insofar as differences in taste are purely affective, insofar as they are *merely* differences in taste, Hume concedes that there is simply "no room to give the one the preference above the other" (ibid.: 244). But insofar as differences in taste arise from differences in perception, Hume believes that we have a standard for preferring some tastes above others because we have a standard for preferring some perceptions above others. Since we regard perceptions as accurate or inaccurate as they represent or fail to represent the nuances of the objects to which they refer, we may regard sentiments as "right" or (presumably) "wrong" as they arise from accurate or inaccurate perceptions (ibid.: 230). The questions of whether and when there is a standard of taste thus reduce to the questions of whether and when differences in taste result from differences in perception. When differences in taste do result from differences in perception, the former fall heir to the standard of the latter, and so end up having the very standard the Lockean thesis seemed to have deprived them of: "real matter of fact."

Hume opens his essay by conceding what is "too obvious not to have fallen under every one's observation": that a "great variety of Taste … prevails in the world" (Hume 1985: 226). Amid that great variety, however, Hume remarks conspicuous instances of uniformity: the "same HOMER," for example, "who pleased at ATHENS and ROME two thousand years ago, is still admired at PARIS and at LONDON" (ibid.: 233). That the works of Homer, Virgil, Terence and Cicero, among presumably many others, have pleased minds in such diverse places and times indicates that they possess qualities that the mind, by its nature, takes pleasure in perceiving (ibid.: 233, 243). That the mind naturally takes pleasure in the perception of certain properties – and displeasure, he presumes, in the perception of certain others – means that it operates according to what Hume calls "principles of taste" or "rules of art": principles stating simply that the perception of certain properties of objects always gives rise to pleasurable sentiments of beauty, or to displeasurable sentiments of "deformity," in the human mind (ibid.: 231–34). Hume's interest in positing principles of taste – principles asserting universal causal links between the two stages of the

mechanism of taste – is perhaps clear: insofar as the mind operates according to them, differences in taste can only be perceptual in origin, for insofar as uniform perceptions of objects lead inevitably to uniform affective responses, divergent affective responses lead inevitably back to divergent perceptions. It therefore follows that when, for example, we fail to take pleasure in works possessing properties "fitted by nature" (ibid.: 235) to please us, the blame falls neither on works, nor on principles, but on us. "Some particular forms or qualities, from the original structure of the internal fabric, are calculated to please," Hume writes, "and if they fail of their effect in any particular instance, it is from some apparent defect or imperfection in the organ" (ibid.: 233).

Hume devotes considerable attention to cataloguing and describing the defects that prevent our taking pleasure in works "fitted by nature" to please us. His catalogue includes five items: lack of "delicacy," lack of "good sense," failure to have practiced, failure to have formed comparisons, and prejudice. Delicacy is the ability to perceive each of the "ingredients," or aesthetically relevant properties, of works perceivable by the senses, particularly those that are difficult to detect because they are overshadowed by other properties or present only in small degree (Hume 1985: 234–37). Good sense is the ability to perceive each of the ingredients or properties of works perceivable by reason, such as "the mutual relation and correspondence" of a work's parts, or the suitability of a work to achieve the particular end for which it was designed (ibid.: 240). To possess both delicacy and good sense is presumably to possess the ability to perceive all the aesthetically relevant properties of works. Hume recommends practice, it appears, merely as the best method to acquire both delicacy and good sense (ibid.: 237–38). The formation of comparisons "between the several species and degrees of excellence" enables one to assign the proper comparative weight to each pleasure occasioned by the perception of each ingredient (ibid.: 238). To be prejudiced with respect to a work is to allow pleasures or displeasures arising from extraneous factors, such as biases for or against the artist's person or culture, to distort one's response to the work (ibid.: 239–40). We may summarize, then, by saying that persons free from each of these five defects are persons whose affective response to artworks arises from the properly weighted perceptions of only and all the aesthetically relevant properties of those works. We may simplify still further, perhaps, by saying that persons free from the five defects are persons whose affective response to artworks arises from the ideal perception of those works. Hume refers to persons free from the five defects as "true judges," and concludes that "the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty" (ibid.: 241).

Understanding the basis of Hume's conclusion requires a grasp of the somewhat elusive relation between principles of taste and true judges. This may best be illustrated by example. Suppose that my verdict with respect to some particular artwork differs from the verdict of a true judge: the true judge responds with a balance of pleasure over displeasure and I do not. Suppose further that universal principles of taste govern both responses: we are both disposed, given the common nature of our minds, to take the same pleasure and displeasures in the perception of the aesthetically relevant properties of the work. In such a case, the divergence in affective response can be explained only by a divergence in perception, presumably from the

true judge's success and my failure to have perceived certain of the work's aesthetically relevant properties. The only way I can now avoid conceding that the true judge's response is superior to mine, and not merely different from it, is to maintain that the true judge's perception is not superior to mine, but merely different from it. But I cannot maintain this: "the sentiments of all mankind are agreed" in acknowledging it "to be the perfection of every sense or faculty to perceive with exactness its most minute objects, and allow nothing to escape its notice and observation" (Hume 1985: 236). It follows, therefore, that where there exist universal principles linking the perception of the properties of a work to the arousal of sentiments of pleasure and displeasure in the mind, where, in other words, we would all respond uniformly to a work if we only ideally perceived it, the response of the true judge is the ideal response because the perception of the true judge is ideal perception.

Hume acknowledges, however, the existence of cases in which principles of taste do not fully govern our affective responses: cases, in other words, in which differences in affective response do not result entirely from differences in perception. He notes, near the essay's end, that in addition to the five mainly perceptual defects under which "the generality of men labour" (Hume 1985: 241), there exist two additional sources of diversity of taste: "the different humours of particular men" and "the particular manners and opinions of our age and country" (ibid.: 243). Such constitutional and cultural differences, Hume maintains, will bring about divergent affective responses to the perception of certain properties of artworks, which means that no principles of taste will specify those properties, and that uniform perceptions of works possessing them will not necessarily issue in uniform affective responses. When differences in taste with respect to such works arise without perceptual basis, then they are mere differences in taste, and "we seek in vain for a standard, by which to reconcile the contrary sentiments" (ibid.: 244). It is because of the possibility of such "blameless" differences in taste that Hume maintains that we have a standard of taste only when true judges render a *joint* verdict. To say that a verdict of true judges is joint is to say that it is the verdict that any ideal perceiver would give, regardless of particular constitution or cultural background: a verdict jointly rendered by true judges, it turns out, just is a verdict governed by principles of taste. There is a sense in which such verdicts belong to us all. They are fully expressive of our own affective dispositions; they are fully expressive, we might say, of our own tastes. They are the verdicts we would all give, if only we perceived better; the verdicts of our perceptually better selves.

One element of Hume's account has not aged well. In asserting that a property that pleases in one artwork will please equally in all, Hume ignores a crucial role that context is now recognized to play in the value of artworks: no property of artworks, we now realize, is everywhere a merit. But it is far from clear that a more nuanced account of principles cannot calm contextualist worries while accomplishing what Hume's theory asks of it. Moreover, there is nothing in Hume's theory that drives his particular account of principles: it should be possible to substitute a sophisticated version with little violence to the rest of the theory. The rest is worth saving. In distinguishing mere differences of taste from perceptually based differences of taste, and in then arguing that the latter must have a standard in "real matter of fact," Hume provides a basis for understanding aesthetic norms that is as promising as any our discipline has seen.

See also Kant (Chapter 5), Phenomenology (Chapter 13), Sibley (Chapter 19), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Taste (Chapter 25), Aesthetic universals (Chapter 26), Value of art (Chapter 28), Beauty (Chapter 29).

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5
KANT

Donald W. Crawford

Immanuel Kant's seminal work, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*), published in 1790 (Kant 2000), is the foundational treatise in modern philosophical aesthetics, and its importance and influence remain evident today. Until the late 1780s, Kant did not consider what we know today as aesthetics to be a legitimate subject for philosophy. He denied the possibility of principles of taste, holding that our judgments about beauty are subjective, based simply on pleasure and thus only a topic for empirical studies (anthropology or history). Nor did he regard aesthetic perception to be related to the realms of cognitive judgment, understanding and ideas. Kant's drive for philosophical systematicity led him to reconsider whether a critical examination of our faculty of feeling pleasure might uncover a third branch of philosophy, joining theoretical philosophy (metaphysics) and practical philosophy (ethics) in being based on a priori principles. Taking as his paradigm a subclass of judgments thought to be based on feeling pleasure, namely judgments that something is beautiful, which he called "judgments of taste," he wrote his third *Critique*.

The Analytic of the Beautiful

The beginning section of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the "Analytic of the Beautiful," consists in an analysis of "what is required for calling an object beautiful" (§1 n., see Kant 2000 throughout). It is divided into four "Moments," corresponding to the headings of the table of judgments in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: quantity, quality, relation and modality (Kant 1997: A70/B95). The fit of the judgment of taste to this table is strained, but the structure serves Kant's purpose of systematic elucidations of the formal properties of judgments of taste and becomes the heart of his aesthetic theory. They are analyses of what we are committing ourselves to in making a judgment of taste. At the same time, parts of these sections go beyond mere analysis, anticipating and overlapping with the content of later sections.

Disinterested pleasure

The judgment of taste is the judgment that something is or is not beautiful. The First Moment (Quality) of the Analytic of the Beautiful concludes that in order to call an

object beautiful one must judge it to be "an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction *without any interest*" (§5). How does Kant reach this conclusion? He begins with the observation that the judgment of taste is an *aesthetic* judgment, which he contrasts with a cognitive judgment. In making a cognitive judgment I refer my experiential content to an object by means of a concept; for example, I judge that what I am now aware of is print on paper. When I make an aesthetic judgment, on the other hand, I refer the experiential content back to my own subjective state. In judging something to be beautiful, what one is aware of (a painting, a building, a flower) is "related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure" (§1). Thus, generically, judgments of taste are a subset of that type of judgment that says that something is pleasing to apprehend; they are therefore subjective rather than objective judgments.

Kant then differentiates the pleasure in the beautiful from other pleasures, by claiming that it is not based on any interest, but is "a disinterested and *free* satisfaction; for no interest, neither that of the senses nor that of reason, extorts approval" (§5). The pleasure we feel in finding something beautiful is not a pleasure based on any interest we have in its simply gratifying our senses, such as candy satisfying a craving for sweetness; nor is it a pleasure on finding that an object is useful (practically good) or on finding that it fulfills moral requirements (morally good). The pleasure in the beautiful, in contrast to these, is not based on any interest in the *existence* of an object; it is "merely *contemplative*" (§5).

Although this explanation of the pleasure in the beautiful as a disinterested pleasure seems merely negative, the notions of *free* contemplation and reflection anticipate Kant's positive attempt to show the legitimacy of the judgment of taste as a unique type of judgment. Contemplation and reflection are absent in the case of what pleases merely through sensation; and in judging what is useful or moral, reflection and contemplation are not free but constrained by definite concepts.

Universal pleasure

The Second Moment (Quantity, §§6–9), begins to make this clearer, although the text is difficult because Kant goes beyond merely analyzing the judgment of taste and anticipates justifying its legitimacy as a class of judgment based on an a priori principle. Its conclusion, "that is *beautiful* which pleases universally without a concept" (§9), is confusing, since it is plainly false – beautiful objects do not please everyone. The more warranted conclusion would be the title given to §6: "The beautiful is that which, without concepts, is represented as the object of a *universal* satisfaction."

The First Moment encapsulates the common-sense notion that one judges something to be beautiful based on the pleasure one feels in apprehending it. The Second Moment enshrines our belief that the pleasure in the beautiful is not wholly subjective but has some basis that justifies us thinking others should find the object beautiful as well, while fully recognizing that not everyone will in fact agree with us. Kant calls this feature of judgments of taste their "subjective universality" (§6).

Kant supports this thesis in two ways. The first is by reference to the concept of disinterestedness. If one believes the pleasure in finding something beautiful is not

owing to any interest, then one naturally concludes that the pleasure does not depend on any private conditions but must be regarded "as grounded on those [conditions] that he can also presuppose in everyone else … Consequently there must be attached to the judgment of taste, with the consciousness of an abstraction in it from all interest, a claim to validity for everyone" (§6). Secondly, Kant appeals to semantic considerations. If someone says that sparkling wine from the Canary Islands is agreeable, "someone else should improve his expression and remind him that he should say, 'It is agreeable *to me*'" (§7). Kant believes this is true of personal taste with respect to all the senses, and concludes that "with regard to the agreeable, the principle *Everyone has his own taste* (of the senses), is valid" (§7). But Kant maintains that it would be ridiculous for someone who is taken by a building or a poem should seek justification by saying "This object … is beautiful *for me*" (§7). Kant interprets this as revealing our implicit claim for universality in our judgments of taste. We judge beauty not merely for ourselves, but for everyone, and speak of beauty as if it were a property of things rather than referring only to our private satisfaction.

An additional conclusion is that this implied universality is not an objective but only a subjective universality. Kant thinks this follows from the fact that judgments of taste cannot be proven: "Thus there can also be no rule in accordance with which someone could be compelled to acknowledge something as beautiful" (§8). This theme recurs in §34, where Kant emphasizes that no syllogism can force one's assent to a judgment of taste, but that judging something to be beautiful requires that one must *immediately* feel pleasure in experiencing the object. Later this same theme forms the "thesis" of the "Antinomy of Taste" (§56).

Kant's explication of judgments of taste appears to result in an insoluble problem. The judgment of taste is based on the feeling of pleasure but also claims universal validity; yet judgments of taste cannot be proved, since they do not rest on concepts or rules. Hence it must be the feeling of pleasure itself that one postulates as universally communicable. How can that be? Kant faces this crucial question in §9, which he says "is the key to the critique of taste." The brief answer is that a pleasure can be universally communicable only if it is based on a state of mind that is universally communicable. And since the only universally communicable mental states are cognitive, somehow the pleasure in the beautiful must be based on cognition. Since the judgment of taste is not cognitive in the defining sense of making reference to a determinate concept, the pleasure underlying the judgment of taste must be based on "*cognition in general*" (§9). Kant then identifies this with the free play of the cognitive faculties – imagination and understanding – in harmony with one another, a harmony we are aware of only *through* the feeling of pleasure. So the pleasure in the beautiful is dependent on judging (estimating, appraising) the object, which activity is the free play of the cognitive faculties, and the pleasure comes about when the faculties are felt to be in harmony, attaining "the well-proportioned disposition [*Stimmung*] that we require for all cognition" (§9). It's as if cognition had successfully occurred, only the result is not the determinate cognition of a conceptual judgment. Nonetheless, the judgment takes the *form* of a conceptual judgment, since we speak of beauty "as if it were a property of things" and say "the *thing* is beautiful" (§7).

The form of purposiveness

The Third Moment (Relation, §§10–17) purports to explain what is being related to in the judgment that something is beautiful, the *content* of the judgment of taste. Kant concludes that "*Beauty* is the form of the *purposiveness* of an object, insofar as it is perceived in it *without representation of an end*" (§17). This claim is complex. The straightforward part is that pleasure in the beautiful is owing to the perceived *form* of the object, in contrast to sensations or concepts of it.

Kant argues that a *pure* judgment of taste cannot be based on pleasures of charm or emotion (§13), nor simply on empirical sensations such as charming colors or pleasing tones (§14), nor on a definite concept (§16), but only on formal properties. Kant characterizes these as essentially spatial and temporal relations, as manifested in the spatial delineation or design (*Zeichnung*) of figures and the temporal composition (*Komposition*) of tones (§14). Ornamentation or elements of charm or emotion may attract us to beautiful objects, but judging them purely in terms of beauty requires abstracting from these elements and reflecting only on their form. To this extent Kant seems to advocate a formalist aesthetics.

The more difficult part of the Third Moment concerns Kant's concept (or perhaps multiple concepts) of "purposiveness … without an end" (§10), "subjective purposiveness," "the mere form of purposiveness" (§11), "formal purposiveness" (§12), "formal subjective purposiveness" and "purposive form" (§15). The key here is the concept of purpose or end, which Kant defines in general as "that the *concept* of which can be regarded as the ground of the possibility of the object itself" (§15). To say that an object (for example, a knife) has a purpose is to say that the concept of its being the way it is, having the form it has, came first and is the cause of its existence. It was intended to be the way it is. The knife's form makes sense because we understand what it is supposed to be; it has a purpose. But experiencing a thing's beauty must be different than apprehending its form as reflecting a *definite* purpose. For this would be to consider it either as something that gratifies us through sensation (thus serving only our individual, subjective purposes), or as serving an objective, useful purpose; and neither of these would satisfy the condition that a judgment of taste not be based on interest or concepts. Kant's fundamental claim is that we can find an object to be *purposive in its form* even though we do not conceptualize a definite purpose, and thus "do not place the causes of this form in a will" (§10). This harmony in its perceived form is grounded on a harmony in our cognitive powers (imagination and understanding) in our reflection on the object, which harmony is itself the pleasure we experience when we find an object beautiful (§12).

Necessary pleasure

The final Moment of the Analytic of the Beautiful is that of Modality (§§18–22). Kant concludes "that is *beautiful* which is cognized without a concept as the object of a *necessary* satisfaction" (§22). The beautiful "has a necessary relation to satisfaction" (§18), since when we find something beautiful we think that everyone ought to give their approval and also describe it as beautiful. This cannot be a theoretical, objective necessity, since we cannot prove that everyone will feel the same pleasure; nor can it be a practical necessity, since we cannot prove that everyone ought to act in a

specific way. Rather, Kant says, the necessity is "exemplary" (§18), "subjective" and "conditioned" (§19). "One solicits assent from everyone else because one has a ground for it that is common to all" (§19). He describes this as a "*common sense*" – "a subjective principle, which determines what pleases or displeases only through feeling and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity" (§20). This common sense is exemplary – an ideal or norm – but is presupposed by us in making judgments of taste.

The deduction of judgments of taste

Strictly speaking, the Analytic of the Beautiful was only supposed to discover "what is required for calling an object beautiful" (§1 n.), that is, to give an explanation of what a judgment of taste means. In fact, in this division Kant also begins to discuss the problem that he later says subsumes the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* under transcendental philosophy: whether one can provide a "deduction" (show the legitimacy) of a class of judgment "which requires this satisfaction of everyone as necessary" (§36). This is the key question of philosophical aesthetics: Is it legitimate to make a judgment based merely on the pleasure experienced in perceptually apprehending something while implying that everyone ought to agree? By insisting that the implied universality and necessity of judgments of taste requires philosophical legitimization (deduction), Kant believes he has established a link to "the general problem of transcendental philosophy: How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?" (§36).

The path to an answer is initiated in the Analytic of the Beautiful. In §9, Kant claims the pleasure in the beautiful must be based on "cognition in general," which is described as the harmony of the cognitive faculties (imagination and understanding) in free play – that is, not determined by concepts. In §11, this harmony is characterized as the representation of the mere form of purposiveness by which an object is given to us. In §15, the determining ground of the judgment is "the feeling (of internal sense) of that unison in the play of the powers of the mind, insofar as they can only be sensed." And finally in §21 the harmony is described as "the subjective condition of cognizing," a "disposition of the cognitive powers" that "cannot be determined except through feeling (not by concepts)." Thus the judgment of taste presupposes or postulates the universal capacity to experience this feeling, which Kant refers to as a "common sense" (§§20–22).

The section of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* actually titled "Deduction of Pure Aesthetic Judgments" (§§30–40) sets up the key issue in the same way posed by the Analytic of the Beautiful: the need to justify the implied universality and necessity of the judgment of taste, a judgment based on perceptual pleasure and not susceptible of proof through appeal to definite rules or principles. This justification can only succeed by reference to cognition and specifically to the subjective conditions for making judgments in general. Kant thus claims that "the judgment of taste must rest on a mere sensation of the reciprocally animating imagination in its *freedom* and the understanding with its *lawfulness*" (§35). The conclusion of the Deduction is clearly stated in §38: it is legitimate to impute to everyone the pleasure we experience in the beautiful because, first, we are claiming that it rests on that subjective element that we rightly can presuppose in everyone as requisite for cognition in general, because

otherwise we would not be able to communicate with one another; and second, we are also assuming that our judgment of taste is pure, that is, not affected by charm, emotion, the mere pleasantness of sensation, or even concepts.

Experiencing beauty is thus, for Kant, a doubly reflective process. We reflect on the spatial and temporal form of the object by exercising our powers of judgment (imagination and understanding), and we acknowledge the beauty of an object when, through the feeling of pleasure, we come to be aware of the harmony of these faculties, which awareness must come by reflecting on our own mental states. In §40 Kant again takes up the idea of a "common sense," first introduced in §20, and characterizes it as "an effect of mere reflection on the mind," which we experience "not as a thought, but as the internal feeling of a purposive state of mind" (§40).

The sublime

Kant's examples of the sublime in nature are similar to those used by English theorists and found in the geography and travel books of the time. He refers to the wide ocean disturbed by a storm, the starry heavens, mountain peaks rising to great heights, and deep chasms with raging torrents. Confining his attention to the sublime in nature, he almost completely ignores the sublime in art. The basic components of Kant's theory of the sublime are not original but a synthesis of various British and German doctrines. Kant's uniqueness lies in his thoroughly secular treatment of the sublime and integrating it into his philosophical system.

The "Analytic of the Sublime" (§§23–29) consists of a twofold division into the mathematically sublime and the dynamically sublime, which relate respectively to nature's vastness and power. In contrast to his analysis of the beautiful, basing it on formal purposiveness, both divisions relate to formlessness, our inability to apprehend nature in definite spatiotemporal measures.

We experience the *mathematically sublime* in encountering and reflecting upon natural objects of great magnitude, such as the sea, huge mountains, vast deserts and the night sky. By selecting some unit of measure (such as a meter) and working logically according to a rule, we can estimate the size of such natural objects. This process of estimating vast magnitudes can continue indefinitely. There is nothing surprising in this, nor anything sublime. The sublime occurs, Kant says, when in this process of logical estimation "the mind hears in itself the voice of reason" (§26), which demands a totality and urges us to comprehend the vastness in one intuition, a single presentation for all the members of the progressively increasing series. At some point we realize our inability to do this, that no standard of sense apprehension is adequate to the idea of the infinite. This frustrating realization of the inherent limitations of our powers leads to a feeling of displeasure. And yet our ability *to think* of that which is great beyond all comparison leads to our awareness of a supersensible ability, "a faculty of the mind which surpasses every standard of sense" (§26): a faculty which exercises dominion over our own sensible powers, always directing us toward a more adequate sensible representation of our ideas, as we strive for a greater and greater totality of systematic knowledge. The initial displeasure or frustration felt in trying to apprehend that which is too great even for

our imagination arises from an apparent conflict between our faculties (sense intuition versus comprehension by reason). But it yields a pleasure if, through this very conflict, we are made aware of the power of our reason to direct sensibility and judgment.

We experience the *dynamically sublime* in reflecting upon extremely powerful natural objects and phenomena that are capable of exciting fear. Kant mentions overhanging cliffs, thunder and lightning storms, erupting volcanoes, hurricanes and raging oceans, which "make our capacity to resist into an insignificant trifle in comparison with their power" (§28). Once again, according to Kant, we experience a displeasure, this time caused by the realization of the inadequacy of our physical powers of resistance to nature's might.

Although literally helpless in the face of these forces of nature, Kant argues that "we can, however, consider an object as *fearful* without being afraid *of* it" (ibid.), as we notice when in the presence of such forces we nonetheless feel secure from actual danger. Nature's might makes us recognize our own physical impotence, considered as beings of nature, but at the same time reveals to us our unique power of a different kind of resistance. We have the ability, through the use of our reason, to direct our sensible faculties not to feel fear in fearful circumstances. On Kant's view, the awareness of this power of reason over sensibility produces the pleasure marking the feeling of the dynamically sublime.

Kant insists, however, that we speak imprecisely in saying that a natural object is sublime. Sublimity, he maintains, is not really a characteristic of nature. "Thus the wide ocean, enraged by storms, cannot be called sublime. Its visage is horrible" (§23). Instead, sublimity is a form of human self-awareness, *through feeling*, of a transcendental power of the human mind. Through the experience of the sublime "we can become conscious of being superior to nature within us and thus also to nature outside us (insofar as it influences us)" (§28). What is it within us that Kant believes is superior to nature? Kant's metaphysics surfaces here, as he refers to his *Critique of Pure Reason* doctrine that behind the empirical, causally determined self of the empirical world there lies a supersensible, noumenal self possessing free will. The mathematically sublime and the dynamically sublime are thus two modes of our supersensible freedom revealing itself and thus providing pleasure in the realization of our true nature.

Natural beauty

Kant's first discussion of natural beauty is reflected in his doctrine of free and dependent beauty (§15–17). He says that flowers are "free natural beauties" (§16) in that we do not consider their reproductive purpose in viewing them merely as to their form. When they please in themselves, our judgments of their beauty are pure. This contrasts with judgments that attribute beauty based on an object's realization of "a concept of its perfection," how good a thing is of its kind, for example "the beauty of a human being … the beauty of a horse, of a building (such as a church, a palace, an arsenal, or a garden-house)" (§16). Kant implies that in judging a building to be a beautiful church, we consider its form as dependent on the purpose a church serves, whereas in judging it as free beauty, we either do not know or do not

consider its purpose. Kant believes that nature provides us with the most accessible examples of free beauty.

Kant's second characterization of natural beauty is that "natural beauty … carries with it a purposiveness in its form, through which the object seems as it were to be predetermined for our power of judgment, and thus constitutes an object of satisfaction in itself" (§23). Here Kant seems to think that natural beauty is the exemplar of the "purposiveness of form" that he earlier (§14) claimed was the basis of the pleasure underlying the judgment of taste.

Kant's third discussion of natural beauty explores whether "the mere universal communicability of … feeling must in itself already involve an interest for us" (§40). He denies this with respect to art, but concludes that if someone takes an immediate interest in the beauty of nature "we thus have cause at least to suspect a predisposition to a good moral disposition" (§42). Kant's reasoning is contorted, but relates to his view that we are intent on finding whether our ideas have objective reality. We have an interest in nature being suitable for our powers of judgment, and we experience pleasure when we find it so. Kant claims this interest is akin to the moral. Morality is only possible if there is an accord between nature and our exercise of free will, if the ends proposed by reason can be actualized in the natural world. However, this purposiveness of natural beauty for our faculties cannot be shown to be real; it is only ideal (§58). When nature appears beautiful, it is *as if it* were designed for our reflective powers of judgment. The beautiful in nature gives us an indication that natural laws and our mental powers are in harmony, a harmony which is necessary if we are to create a moral world: a kingdom of ends.

Fine art and artistic genius

"Nature [is] beautiful, if at the same time it [looks] like art; and art can only be called beautiful if we are aware that it is art and yet it looks to us like nature" (§45). The beautiful in nature appears as if it were designed, made in accordance with rules of art. Art differs from nature since it is the product of human freedom; it must appear spontaneous although rules may be followed precisely in producing it. Art differs from science in requiring skill in addition to knowledge; it differs from handicraft since its production requires more than following rules (§43).

Kant's doctrine of artistic creativity became the cornerstone of Romanticism. Fine art (*schöne Kunst*; literally translated as "beautiful art") is the art of the artistic genius, who has "a *talent* for producing that for which no determinate rule can be given" (§46) – something original and exemplary and which serves as a model for others. Genius is an innate talent that cannot be taught, and the creative process is ineffable, even to the artist (§§47, 49). Genius requires *creative* imagination, "creating, as it were, another nature, out of the material which the real one [nature] gives it," transforming that material "into something entirely different, namely into that which steps beyond nature" (§49). The animating principle of the mind behind such creative activity is spirit (*Geist*), which Kant characterizes as "the faculty for the presentation of *aesthetic ideas*" (§49). Aesthetic ideas are the content of works of art; they are linked to concepts, but not determined by them. They are the symbolic

presentations of rational ideas (such as love, death, envy) through sensible intuitions (such as images in representational painting or poetry).

Successfully presenting aesthetic ideas in works of fine art requires more than creative imagination; it also requires judgment or taste. "Genius can only provide rich *material* for products of [fine] art; its elaboration and *form* require a talent that has been academically trained, in order to make a use of it that can stand up to the power of judgment" (§47). Therefore genius must be trained and cultivated, "for all the richness of the former [the imagination] produces, in its lawless freedom, nothing but nonsense" (§50). In fact, Kant suggests that if imagination and judgment conflict in the creation of art, imagination should be limited by judgment and understanding, otherwise communication in the expression of aesthetic ideas – the ultimate aim of fine art – will not succeed (§50).

Kant's treatment of the fine arts concludes with cursory analyses of the individual arts, an attempt to classify the fine arts in terms of their similarities and differences (§51), as well as brief comparisons of their relative worth in terms of ability to express aesthetic ideas, stimulate mental activity and promote culture (§53).

Aesthetics and morality

Kant discusses the relation between aesthetics and morality in three different places. The first is the "General Remark" following §29, in which he says that both the beautiful and the sublime are purposive, in reference to moral feeling. "The beautiful prepares us to love something, even nature, without interest; the sublime, to esteem it, even contrary to our (sensible) interest."

Then in §42 Kant maintains "that to take an *immediate interest* in the beauty of *nature* (not merely to have taste in order to judge it) is always the mark of a good soul." It is an interest akin to the moral, because the latter requires our interest in the conformity of nature to our faculties. But Kant denies an analogous relationship between an immediate interest in fine art and the moral.

Kant's final discussion of the relationship between beauty and morality occurs in "On Beauty as a Symbol of Morality" (§59) and "On the Methodology of Taste" (§60). The meaning and significance of these sections and their relevance to Kant's "deduction" of judgments of taste have been variously interpreted, but at a minimum Kant seems to think there is an analogy between the two realms. The pleasure in apprehending and judging beauty (and perhaps the sublime as well) is ultimately based on an awareness of (and pleasure in) our faculty of judgment itself exercising a power over sensibility, which is required if morality is to have a point. Based on this analogy, it is possible for an individual's exercise of taste to transfer to the moral realm, the realm requiring the exercise of our freedom (in judgment, above all) to direct our actions in the empirical world.

Kant's heritage

Kant's aesthetic theory is systematic and comprehensive, relating our experience and judgment of natural beauty and art to basic epistemological, metaphysical and ethical

concepts. That heritage is evident in the aesthetic theories after him: Schiller, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, as well as many twentieth-century writers. Kant's theory encompasses many of the issues in philosophical aesthetics still discussed extensively and energetically today. His everlasting importance to aesthetics is best revealed through careful reading of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. However difficult that may seem at first, it repays the effort many times over.

See also Empiricism (Chapter 4), Hegel (Chapter 6), Idealism (Chapter 7), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Taste (Chapter 25), Aesthetic universals (Chapter 26), Beauty (Chapter 29), Creativity (Chapter 42), Environmental aesthetics (Chapter 47).

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Further reading

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6
HEGEL

Michael Inwood

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) was, along with Fichte and Schelling, one of the three great "German idealists" who followed in the wake of Kant. He differed from Kant in several respects. In particular, he believed that human beings acquire their grasp of the world and of themselves not only through prosaic cognition but also through art and religion: they are ways of discovering the world and ourselves, not simply ways of beautifying or sanctifying what we have already discovered. He believed too that our ways of making sense of things – art, religion, even our fundamental categories or thoughts – develop over history. Thus Hegel is concerned not only with the formal features of art, but with its content or meaning. He is also concerned with the history of art and with its changing relationship to its competitors, religion and philosophy (or "science"). He sometimes presents art, religion and philosophy as progressively satisfactory ways of grasping the "absolute" or the nature of things: art grasps the absolute in sensory intuition, religion in pictorial imagination (*Vorstellung*), philosophy in conceptual thought (Hegel 1975: 101ff.).

Hegel's writings

Hegel's earliest writings, composed soon after his departure from the Tübingen theological seminary in 1793, deal with religion and have little to say about art. A fragment in his handwriting now entitled "The Earliest System–Programme of German Idealism" (Hegel 1989) suggests that, like his friends from Tübingen, Hölderlin and Schelling, he hoped for a fusion of beauty, truth and goodness, of poetry, philosophy and morality, in a society that would be, like ancient Athens, a "political work of art" (Hegel 1956: 250). But he soon abandoned this hope, arguing that "science" or philosophy is quite distinct from poetry, and that modern society is essentially unaesthetic and cannot be remodeled on the Greek city state.

His first major work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 1979 [1807]), sets "science" above both art and religion, but illuminates certain phases of history by art. Greek society, for example, is seen in terms of tragedy, primarily Sophocles's *Antigone* (Hegel 1979: 266ff., ¶¶444ff.). Art appears again under the heading of religion: "Natural Religion" considers the religious artifacts of pre-Greek religions, while

"The Religion of Beauty" treats of Greek art and the religion with which, in pre-Hellenistic times, it was closely connected. There follows a section entitled "Revealed Religion," which deals with Christianity and makes no mention of art, implying that art has completed its serious business when Christianity appears on the scene.

Science of Logic (Hegel 1969 [1812–16]), written while Hegel was a headmaster in Nuremberg (1808–16), has little explicit concern with art, but it elaborates a conceptual system which Hegel later uses to comprehend art. In 1817, after gaining a professorship at Heidelberg, Hegel published an *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* to accompany his lectures; expanded editions appeared in 1827 and 1830. In the third part of this, the "Philosophy of Mind" (Hegel 2007 [1830]), art again appears as a prelude to "revealed religion" and to "philosophy" (Hegel 2007: 257ff.). However, in the lectures that he was now preparing on aesthetics, he dealt with all the fine arts – architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry – and with all periods, from the earliest periods known to him – Persia, India, Egypt – down to modern times. He delivered the lectures four times, not at Heidelberg, but at the new university of Berlin where he was a professor from 1818 until his death. The lectures were published posthumously in 1835 and 1842.

The development of the mind

A human being is a mind. A mind essentially knows itself or is, to a degree, self-conscious. What a mind is depends on what it knows itself, or is conscious of itself, as being. For the mind has no static nature or properties, as say a tree does, that would make it a mind independently of what it knows about itself. A mind is, at any given stage, what it knows itself to be. A mind cannot know itself without knowing the external world. For, firstly, a mind stands in contrast to the external world, and in order to know itself it must draw a boundary between itself and what is other than itself. Secondly, a mind is not entirely cut off from what is other than mind. It incorporates parts of the nonmental world as its own, most especially its body, but later its home, its country, and eventually the whole world insofar as it is intellectually and practically involved with it. Thirdly, a mind cannot at first know itself directly. It knows itself by seeing its own reflection in the external world, the deeds it performs, the marks it makes, the words it utters and inscribes.

Self-knowledge is not a matter of all or nothing, but of degree. A mind does not get to know itself all at once. Self-knowledge develops by stages over time. At a given stage, a mind is in a state which can be called S_1, and is aware that it is S_1. Mind's awareness of S_1 is, however, a different state from its simply being S_1. It is a new state, S_2. Then mind has to become aware that it is S_2, and this in turn propels it into a further state, S_3. And so on, until the mind has attained complete self-knowledge, a state such that awareness of that state is not a different, higher, state. A single human mind does not acquire self-knowledge on its own. It does so in consort with other minds, together with which it forms a linguistic and cultural network. So intimately associated is one mind with another that Hegel usually speaks of a society as a single "mind" or "spirit" (*Geist*) into which individual minds are integrated. Mind

develops both over history and over the life of the individual. An infant's body is initially not in the control of its undeveloped mind and is viewed as strange and alien. As its mind develops it takes over its body and learns to express itself in it. By education – a process which, in Hegel's view, involves alienation such as repressive discipline and the learning of foreign languages at the expense of one's vernacular – the individual is eventually integrated into the culture or "mind" of the time and made into what is, for the time, a proper human being. Over history human beings gradually expand and deepen their knowledge of themselves and of their world. They do so, in part, by successively reflecting on the stage that they have so far reached. Only after a long journey through the sensory world does the mind purify itself of the sensory and comprehend its intrinsic nature, thought, in the philosophical, conceptual terms appropriate to it.

The role of art

Art serves the development of mind. Thus Hegel is concerned with the beauty of art, not the beauty of nature. ("Beautiful," *schön*, does not usually, in Hegel, contrast with "sublime," nor is it restricted to surface prettiness; it embraces all artistic value, of both form and content.) Nature is to be mastered and redeemed by mind, not contemplated for its own sake:

> the torch-thistle, which blooms for only one night, withers in the wilds of the southern forests without having been admired, and these forests, jungles themselves of the most beautiful and luxuriant vegetation … rot and decay equally unenjoyed. But the work of art is not so naively self-centred; it is essentially a question, an address to the responsive breast, a call to the mind and spirit.
>
> (Hegel 1975: 71)

Art plays a part in the development from infancy to adulthood. The child decorates its body to mark it as its own. It draws pictures of itself, of others and of its environment. It produces effects in the world to contemplate the results of its own activity. Art provides material for contemplation and reflection in a way that purposive activity does not. But Hegel is more interested in art's role in the development of mind over history. Humans have produced art from the earliest times, and art has generally been associated with religion. In the absence of any prosaic theology art was the only medium in which religion could be expressed. Art before the Greeks was "symbolic" art, expressing its meaning by a sensory entity (such as a vast monument) that supposedly has some feature in common with what it stands for (such as an immeasurable deity), but does not otherwise resemble or adequately portray it. Such art – Indian, Persian, Egyptian – strove to express a message that is too thin and elusive to be expressed adequately in a sensory, or in any other, form. Its forte was architecture, handling the natural forces of matter and weight. The deity towards which such art gestures is too abstract and remote to bring order into the natural world. Nature is left in an unredeemed state, and this is mirrored by the

sheer materiality of symbolic art. The human body is not properly portrayed, but often with animal features. Such defects are not to be explained by technical incompetence, but by the deficiency of the worldview that such art expresses. The mind is insufficiently developed and distanced from nature to master its obtrusive disarray. Unsatisfying as it is to us, symbolic art adequately represents the mind of its producers and contemplators.

The Greeks reflected on the art of their predecessors and found it wanting. They expressed in their myths the overcoming of raw natural forces, the Titans, by the Olympian gods. Their forte was sculpture, a genre less dependent on sheer natural forces than architecture, representing the serene human being or the god extricated from the nature it has tamed. Message and medium fit to perfection. The statue does not point towards something unexpressed; no physical detail is superfluous, everything in the statue is needed to express its message. This art is "classical," no longer symbolic. The gods, the essence of the world, are conceived in human form. The world thus mirrors the human mind; the Greeks are entirely at home in their world.

The Greeks had other arts too: epics that laid the foundations of their religion and way of life; tragedies that express the insoluble conflicts between different values (such as the family and the state, represented, respectively, by Antigone and Creon in Sophocles's *Antigone*), conflicts that eventually shattered the world of the Greek city state; and comedies that show the tendency of things to veer into their opposites. But poetry is, along with painting and music, especially associated, not with classicism, but with the third form of art, "Romanticism": a term associated both with medieval Christianity and with the Romantics of Hegel's own day. Symbolic art cannot adequately express its message, since it has too little to express; Romantic art cannot do so, since it has too much to express. Reflection on art, and in general reflection on the current state of the mind, gave rise to philosophy and to a theology independent of art. Art was now open to philosophical and theological assessment, and no longer the final authority on the absolute. Christianity introduced a novel complexity into our view of the nature of things. Christ can adequately be portrayed in art, and so can the Christian community, which Hegel associates with the third member of the Trinity, the holy spirit that is said, in Acts 2, to have inspired the apostles. But the creator god, like the god of Judaism and of Islam, cannot adequately be portrayed in art. Hence although it is not merely symbolic, Romantic art loses the harmony of Greek art and points towards hidden, unpicturable depths that can adequately be conveyed only in philosophy and theology.

The human mind too acquires unportrayable depths. The Greeks, before they were contaminated by philosophy, lived close to the sensory surface of things. Their mental life was readily expressed in the demeanor of their bodies and in sculptural representations of them. Under the impact of philosophy and Christianity, the mind developed an inner life of thought and imagination that cannot be so expressed. Medieval Christianity continued to produce great art, albeit art that was not the most adequate expression of the Christian message or of the human mind. Modern art suffers from the generally unaesthetic environment and from the artist's detachment from any particular cause or creed. Hegel attributes such detachment primarily to the "irony" cultivated by Romantics such as Friedrich Schlegel (Hegel 1993: xxviii ff., 69ff., 154ff.). But he also believes that sympathy with art of all periods, genres and

creeds is a condition for philosophy of art, and that such catholic sympathy is inimical to the partisan attachment required for great art.

Much postmedieval art is nonreligious. But for Hegel, the development of the human mind is inconceivable without religion, without the attempt to discern mind at work in the nature of things, even when this takes the form of irreligion. Thus art is never entirely dissociated from religion. He accommodates apparently secular art, such as Shakespeare's, within an overarching Christianity. He conveys this in two images. Architecture provides the temple; sculpture the statue of the god in the temple; painting, music and poetry treat the worshipers outside the temple. God the Father and God the Son are essentially connected to the Holy Spirit that imbues the community. Human beings are an essential phase of God, who acquires self-consciousness in them. To portray humanity is to portray an essential aspect of divinity.

The Romantic arts continue the process of dematerialization that occurred in the move from architecture to sculpture. Painting is one step removed from the full-bodied spatiality of sculpture: it portrays three-dimensional space and objects on a two-dimensional surface. Music abandons space altogether and contents itself with time, which is more "ideal" than space (Hegel 1975: 88). Moreover, music does not portray events in the external world but the life of the mind itself, though characteristically its emotional rather than its intellectual life. Poetry, finally, reduces the role of the sensory still further. The sound of poetry does not matter in the way that musical sound does. ("Background" music can be enjoyable. Who listens to "background" poetry?) What matters is the meaning, the conceptions, conveyed: and if these can be transposed into a foreign language without loss, the translation is as good as the original. "Conception" is *Vorstellung*, which also means "imagination." Since imagination is involved in all the arts, poetry exposes the common core of all the arts, removing its sensory garb. Poetry is thus the universal art, not simply the last of the Romantic arts. This is why Greece produced poetry that has not been bettered by modernity. Poetry is the most flexible of the arts. It downgrades the sensory, in a way that no other art does, and thus prepares the mind for an encounter with itself unmediated by the sensory. Hegel thus explains why art has a significant history, and also why there are precisely five fine arts.

The end of art?

Hegel seems to have announced the end of art:

> the form of art has ceased to be the supreme need of the spirit. No matter how excellent we find the statues of the Greek gods, no matter how we see God the Father, Christ and Mary so estimably and perfectly portrayed: it is no help; we bow the knee no longer.
>
> (Hegel 1975: 103)

He does so for several reasons. Art reached its peak in ancient Greece, with a perfect coincidence of message and sensory medium that can never be recovered. Greek art is

supremely "beautiful" in a narrow sense of "beauty." In a wider sense of "beauty," in which the word covers all artistic value, particularly the truth and profundity of the message expressed, Christian art is more beautiful than Greek. But Christian art is not a full, or the best, expression of the Christian world view. The art of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is inferior to medieval, let alone Greek art. One reason is this. Art does not promote morality (*Moralität*) in the sense of making bad people good. If this were its purpose, art would not be valuable for its own sake, but a means to an end that might be better served by other means. But art expresses and confirms the ongoing social morality it serves, i.e. the "ethical life" (*Sittlichkeit*) – the customs, codes, hierarchies and festivals – of society. Modern society is, however, irredeemably unaesthetic. The woman taken in adultery provides material for art, even if (as Hegel says) portrayals of her have "seduced many into sin, because art makes repentance look so beautiful, and sinning must come before repentance" (Hegel 1975: 52). The prosaic rules and regulations that govern modern society hinder, rather than help, the artist. What the moderns are good at is reflection on art and philosophy of art. They, and Hegel in particular, have achieved a good understanding of the art of all periods, assigning to each art, and to each art form, its place in the history of humanity. This too suggests that art has completed its work. Each art has been assigned its place in the "pantheon" (Hegel 1975: 90) or "garland" (Hegel 1975: 1236) of beauty (see Hegel 1993: 196–97). What more is there for art to do? Art itself cannot reflect on art as a whole and the totality constituted by the arts and art forms. This is a task that can only be performed by philosophy of art, not by art itself.

Occasionally, however, Hegel suggests that the decline of art is a cyclical phenomenon, not its final end: "With the advance of civilization a time generally comes in the case of every people when art points beyond itself" (Hegel 1975: 103). Hegel thus advances at least four theses. First, perfect art of the Greek type will never recur. Second, art will never regain the spiritual importance it had for the Greeks. Third, that modern art is not as good as medieval and Renaissance art is perhaps a periodic phenomenon, and art may get better as art. Fourth, however good future art may be, it will make no significant addition to the "pantheon" of art or to the resources of the human mind.

The suggestion that art had by Hegel's time done everything that art could do is invalidated by the art of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in particular by new arts such as film, but Hegel's thesis of the end of art as a significant vehicle of the human spirit is less easy to refute. He presents us with a dilemma. Either art has a serious message or it is entertainment. In either case art is dispensable. Art may be entertaining; but we have other ways of entertaining ourselves; in any case entertainment is trivial. If art has a message, why can it not be better expressed by philosophy, science or religion? So far as Hegel's opponent succeeds in explaining the message that art conveys, Hegel's case is confirmed: the message can be put in plain prose and we do not need art to discover it. Plain prose cannot convey the full detail of a work of art; that it cannot do so is part of the point of a statue. But this point too – the incomplete paraphrasability of art – can be expressed in prose. Art is in constant danger of being reduced to second-rate philosophy, necessary only for those too immersed in the sensory to savor the real thing.

Criticizing Hegel

It is not easy to reject Hegel's end-of-art thesis without further damage to his philosophy. The aim of the mind, he argues, is to know itself as it really is. What the mind really is, is thought. Hence to know itself in a fully appropriate way it must know itself by conceptual thought. The sensory can play only a preparatory part in this. It is true that religion employs pictorial *Vorstellung*, and Hegel does not announce the end of religion. But he should have announced the end of religion, at least as anything more than philosophy for the unreflective masses, and that is a role that he can equally allow to art. The serious business of life is from now on to be conducted in conceptual thought. If art is to be allowed a significant future, Hegel needs to be challenged in one or more of the following ways.

First, we might deny that our rational social order is destined to progress steadily without interruption. Human history may be disrupted by explosions of creative energy that cannot adequately express themselves conceptually, but only by a manipulation of the sensory that qualifies as art. This hypothesis goes beyond Hegel's idea of the cyclical decline and revival of art. It would imply not simply that art may one day become better as art, but that art may once more play a crucial role in the development of mind. It would also imply that the development of mind may not be the relatively steady progress that Hegel envisaged, with a foreseeable terminus in philosophy or science, but a process punctuated by massive upheavals, whose future course and possible terminus we can hardly imagine, let alone foresee.

Second, we might reject Hegel's notion of complete self-consciousness, at least to the extent that it is entirely and unremittingly conceptual and scientific. The sensory, imagination, emotion, even entertainment: all these play a part in human life. Why should self-consciousness require us to downgrade them? They may even have a larger share in our quest for the absolute than Hegel officially allows. The absolute may not be, as he believed, entirely transparent to conceptual thought, so that humanity can ascend by thought to a godlike status. Perhaps art is needed to gesture towards mysteries left by science. Such an admission would grievously impair the symmetry of Hegel's system, which begins with the conceptual thought of the *Science of Logic* and ends with the conceptual thought of philosophy. It would leave no single clear answer to the question what full self-knowledge consists in.

Third, we might resist Hegel's attempt to discern a nonsensory meaning in the sensory and thus to downgrade it. Perhaps painting simply explores shapes and colors, while music creates and explores a world of sound. This too questions Hegel's belief that ultimate meaning always lies in thought, never in sensation or *Vorstellung*. It also raises the question whether art has a single history. One answer to the question may be that, at least since the Greeks, art does not have a history: not, at least, in the way that do science and perhaps philosophy. Modern art does not improve on Greek art in the way that modern physics is an advance on Greek physics. It is just different, with no special claim on our attention apart from its novelty and its appropriateness to our social and cultural circumstances.

Even if we agree that art has a history, it is difficult to accept Hegel's account of it. The fulcrum of that history is for Hegel the perfect harmony of medium and message in Greek art, but the sensory harmony of Greek art is probably deceptive in that

respect. Greek myths about the transformation of gods into animal forms suggest an awareness of a residual mystery that is not fully captured by portrayals of gods in human form. Moreover, while the Greeks had no official theology, they had plenty of philosophers, who from the time of Xenophanes (c.570–480 BC) criticized the anthropomorphic deities of Greek art. Thus despite the unsurpassed beauty of Greek art and its undoubted importance in Greek life, it is not clear that it was ever the complete and impeccable expression of the Greek world view that Hegel took it to be.

The end of Hegel?

Hegel's aim was to depict the development of mind in all its rich complexity. He strove to avoid "one-sidedness," to encompass with a sovereign objectivity all phases and aspects of the evolution of mind. Despite Hegel's aversion to didactic poetry and to most of the productions of his Romantic contemporaries, this objectivity is apparent in his account of art. He has, he believes, devised a system that assigns each art, each art form, every significant work, its appropriate place in the growth of mind. Encompassing objectivity is also apparent in his account of the various aspects of art. The content or meaning of a work is crucial, but this is not to deny the importance of its formal features; certain formal features are required and determined by the content of a work. The centrality of content does not, in Hegel's view, exclude the proposition that a work of art is in some sense an end in itself, valuable for itself, not just as a disposable means to some further end. Again, art may be *both* an end in itself *and* of service to morality, as long as we interpret morality as "ethical life," not as the Kantian morality of conscience. In these respects, and many more, Hegel wants to take on board every significant aspect and relationship of art, without excluding any. This has had a twofold implication for his influence.

First, Hegel's systematic enterprise has had few significant devotees or imitators, few, that is, who have had the energy, learning and confidence to discern a coherent logical structure in the ever-expanding world of art. (Spengler's 1926 systematizing and learning are comparable to Hegel's, but he acknowledged no specific Hegelian influence.) Second, however, since Hegel touched on almost every aspect of art, his work has had an enormous piecemeal influence. His end-of-art thesis, for example, has found support in Danto (1986) and Wind (1963). Perhaps his most significant impact has been on Heidegger (1971), who, although he suspends judgment on the end of art, is close to Hegel when he argues that a work of art opens up a "world."

See also Kant (Chapter 5), Idealism (Chapter 7), Art and ethics (Chapter 38), Sculpture (Chapter 58), Architecture (Chapter 60).

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7
IDEALISM
Schopenhauer, Schiller and Schelling

Dale Jacquette

Philosophy of art in nineteenth-century German idealism is divided into distinct schools corresponding to their author's characteristic metaphysical principles. Aesthetics in this tradition, despite basic points of agreement, radiates outward in different directions from a convergent source in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1978). Kant's critical idealism in metaphysics and epistemology sets the stage for the aesthetic philosophies, among others, of G. W. F. Hegel, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Schopenhauer, Schiller and Schelling. All of these post-Kantian thinkers are idealists, yet there are substantial differences in their interpretations of art, reflecting underlying differences in the specific forms of idealism they develop. What they generally share in common, despite significant disparities in their views, is a commitment to the problem set by Kant of trying to reconcile the fundamental opposition between freedom and necessity.

The Romantic spirit associated with idealism in its later phases, in the writings of Schopenhauer, Schiller and Schelling, glorifies the rebellion of will struggling tragically or heroically against the forces of moral and political authority, social conformity and the regimentation of artistic styles in the world of art. At a deeper metaphysical level, it is the same battle for supremacy of the human spirit and its sense of freedom in conflict with the necessity of natural forces represented by the rigidity of natural scientific law. This is a perennial theme of ethics and metaphysics that is by no means unique to Kant or the post-Kantian thinkers of the period, but one that is made a vital part of the idealist philosophical background to developments in the art and politics of the period. The idealist and later Romantic conception of the human condition in turn promotes the prominence of aesthetics over other subdisciplines of philosophy. In most other intellectual movements, aesthetics is made an adjunct to a more central elaboration of logic, metaphysics and epistemology, consigned to secondary importance almost as an afterthought. For Schopenhauer, Schiller and Schelling, aesthetics is transformed into a topic of primary concern. Even when their philosophical systems are presented first as speculative investigations of basic metaphysical distinctions, they eventually give such importance to aesthetic considerations that they are plausibly interpreted as pursuing problems of ontology and theory of knowledge for the sake of the aesthetic superstructure they support rather than merely exploring aesthetics among a system's other peripheral implications.

Aesthetics is seen by these idealist philosophers as holding the key to understanding, resolving or otherwise coming to terms with the pervasive tension between freedom of the will and lawlike natural necessity. The transition from Schopenhauer to Schiller and Schelling charts a progression toward greater aestheticism and mysticism, advancing from neocritical subjective idealism to transcendental idealism in an aesthetic metaphysics that equates religion, art and nature.

Schopenhauer

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) defends a version of transcendental idealism that integrates insights from Kant, Plato and Asian religious philosophies, particularly Indian Hinduism and Buddhism. Schopenhauer's monumental study, *The World as Will and Representation* (1966), claims to surpass Kant's metaphysics of appearance and thing-in-itself, which Kant also characterizes respectively as "phenomenon" and "noumenon" (Kant 1978).

The world considered as phenomenal appearance, also designated by Schopenhauer as "the world as representation," consists of objects experienced by perceiving subjects. Thing-in-itself, by contrast, is the world in and of itself, independently of how it is perceived and entirely outside of the mind's concepts and categories; it is the world as it would be, so to speak, even if there were no thinking beings like ourselves capable of perceiving it. Unlike Kant, Schopenhauer does not speak of thing-in-itself as noumenal, because he does not regard it as merely thinkable. He goes beyond Kant by arguing that thing-in-itself is pure willing or Will, with which every willing subject is immediately acquainted. Schopenhauer distinguishes between the individual empirical will, which each of us experiences phenomenologically in psychological episodes of desire or wanting, in willing this or that for this or that reason, and pure will or Will as thing-in-itself. He begins with the psychology of ordinary willing and abstracts from such occurrences all particularity involving motivation, cause and intended object. What remains after this conceptual subtraction is pure willing as blind unmotivated urging, which Schopenhauer identifies as thing-in-itself. Pure willing or Will satisfies the essential criteria for thing-in-itself by virtue of being excluded from the principle of individuation and principle of sufficient reason; in effect, Will as a result transcends space, time and causality, precisely as Kant requires of thing-in-itself (Schopenhauer 1966: I, 98–110, II, 191–200).

Thing-in-itself as Will has a definite character, according to Schopenhauer. Its nature is expressed in the world of represented objects existing in the thoughts of representing subjects, within the minds of thinking subjects for whom thing-in-itself is perceptually objectified, or in and for the sake of which it appears. Schopenhauer describes the character of the world in reality, thing-in-itself, as a *hungry* Will (ibid.: I, 154). By this he means that the Will seeks endlessly to devour itself by proxy through its objectifications in the phenomenal world as representation. It is the Will's restless self-consumption that for Schopenhauer explains the inner nature of natural forces such as gravity, crystallization and electromagnetism, along with all aspects of animal and human social behavior. Schopenhauer is rightly portrayed as a moral pessimist because he does not hold out any prospect for the long-term resolution of conflicts

among factions, nor for an eventual state of perpetual peace that Kant had projected in a utopian Kingdom of Ends. The reason is that Schopenhauer regards reality, thing-in-itself as Will, as essentially self-conflicted, inevitably objectifying itself in the world we experience as interpersonal strife, social and political oppositions of every kind, violence, misery and suffering. There is no escape from suffering now or in the future, because the nature of the world in reality is eternal self-conflict. Schopenhauer interprets Plato's Forms or Ideas as "grades" of the Will's objectification in the world as representation, in an ascending hierarchy that proceeds from the lowest nonindividualized grades belonging to general forces like gravity, to the highest, which for Schopenhauer occupies the pinnacle of the pyramid in the great chain of being by ourselves, human beings, as the most individualized things we know (ibid.: I, 129–80).

The distinction between the world as representation and Will as thing-in-itself enables Schopenhauer to interpret the individual phenomenological will as the ground of all suffering. There is, according to Schopenhauer, a never-ending cycle of suffering in which we first need and want things, and then either suffer deprivation as a result of failing to satisfy our desires, or else languish in satiety and boredom, leading to the arousal of ever greater and more demanding, less easily gratified desires. To will, which is to say, to live, which Schopenhauer also refers to as the "will to life", is consequently to suffer (ibid.: I, 154–57, 161, 196, 275–83, 310–15). Schopenhauer describes two paths of salvation from the soul's relentless suffering, both of which involve transcendence of the will to life for the sake of knowledge, insight and understanding, in a "better state of consciousness." The two paths of salvation are those of: (1) the ascetic saint who renounces life and becomes absolutely indifferent to life and death through disciplined mortification of the flesh and suppression of the will to life; and (2) the aesthetic genius, who is capable of transcending individual willing in moments of pure aesthetic contemplation of beauty and the sublime in nature and works of fine art, in which the Platonic Ideas are passively received (ibid.: I, 184–85). The eternal opposition of willing and knowing in Schopenhauer's metaphysics and epistemology has further implications for his aesthetics.

Schopenhauer thus takes Kant's notion of aesthetic genius in a significantly original direction. The aesthetic genius for Schopenhauer is not just someone who is specially gifted in articulating and then freely violating in creative ways the rules for artistic practice, as Kant maintains in the third *Critique*. Schopenhauer's concept of the aesthetic genius is that of someone who is able to suppress individual willing for the sake of knowing, and in particular for the sake of passively receiving the Platonic Ideas as grades of the Will's objectification manifested in the world as representation. Schopenhauer describes a three-part process in the creation of artworks of genius. The genius first becomes "the clear eye of the world" by suppressing the individual will and grasping the Platonic Ideas embodied in nature. An act of imagination is then engaged to complete the Ideas which are necessarily at best only imperfectly and incompletely embodied in empirical reality (ibid.: I, 186–87). Finally, the aesthetic genius must make use of a mastery of artistic media in order to express Platonic Ideas in the concrete form of an artwork so as to communicate a vision of beauty or the sublime (ibid.: I, 188). Although only the true aesthetic genius is able to combine the extreme degrees of all three phases of artistic production in creating

great artworks, Schopenhauer acknowledges that almost everyone is able to achieve some degree of aesthetic transcendence of the will to life in the act of aesthetic enjoyment. The subject in moments of aesthetic appreciation becomes so absorbed in the experience of beauty or the sublime as to momentarily forget all concerns of the will, transfixed by aesthetic fascination beyond the willful needs of self-interest and desire. Schopenhauer acknowledges that aesthetic genius admits of degrees (ibid.: I, 194–95), but he surprisingly denounces the extraordinarily realistic Dutch still-life depictions of foods and historical paintings of nudes as irrepressibly arousing the appetite and thus stirring the individual will to life in ways that conflict with what he takes to be the true purpose of will-less aesthetic contemplation (ibid.: I, 210, II, 376–98).

Schopenhauer establishes a hierarchy of types of artworks corresponding to the hierarchy of Platonic Ideas. The lowest artworks are those that are concerned with the lowest grades of the Will's objectification in the world as representation. Architecture is the lowest art form, according to Schopenhauer, because, although it can also involve painting and other higher forms of art in its decoration, in its purest form architecture concerns the most primal grades of the Will's objectification in the world as representation, namely gravity and mass, and in general the control and distribution of natural forces in the creation of useful spaces (ibid.: I, 214–17). Music, for Schopenhauer, exhibits the highest grade of the Will's objectivity, on the theory that music is altogether independent of the world as representation. Schopenhauer argues that music is a direct and immediate objectification of Will, like the world as representation in nature itself, with no impurity of phenomenal mediation standing between music and thing-in-itself (ibid.: I, 255–62). In this respect, Schopenhauer believes that music is the only exception to what Socrates in Plato's *Republic* describes as the iterative representational nature of all the arts. The prominence of music in Schopenhauer's aesthetics inspired Richard Wagner in his middle- and later-period compositions and treatises on opera. The theory also exerted a powerful impact on Friedrich Nietzsche in the early period of his philosophy in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1999) until his falling out with Wagner after eight years of friendship and collaboration, and his disillusion with and dramatic dissociation from Schopenhauer's transcendental idealism, moral pessimism and denial of the will, beginning with his next book, *Human, All Too Human* (Nietzsche 1986), and culminating in his 1887 "polemic," *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1998).

Schiller

Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805), unlike Schopenhauer, was a professional academic, an historian at the University of Jena, and, again unlike Schopenhauer, more of an aesthete and practitioner of the fine arts than a philosopher. Schiller's primary claim to philosophical importance is the 1795 publication of his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* (1965) and, in the same year, *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry* (1981) sometimes translated as *On the Naive and Sentimental in Literature*, as well as essays "On the Cause of Pleasure in Tragic Objects," "The Art of Tragedy," "On the Sublime," "On Grace and Dignity" (in Schiller 1902)

and *Kallias or Concerning Beauty*, *Letters to Gottfried Körner* (in Bernstein 2002) on the concept of beauty. Schiller wrote his major epistolary treatise, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, arguing that harmony in the individual and society depends on the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility for the timeless classic values of great art that transcend any particular historical epoch.

While Schiller is admired by philosophers for his aesthetic theory, he is generally more well known for his *Sturm und Drang* ("storm and stress") Romantic dramas, some of which were set to music. His play *The Robbers* (*Die Räuber*) was published in 1781 and first performed in Mannheim in 1782. It is often hailed as a landmark in German literature because of its celebration of the theme of personal freedom and liberation from custom, personified by the noble bandit, Karl Moor, who becomes a criminal in rebellion against the oppressive expectations of his father. The play's fictional depiction is not far from the truth of Schiller's own life, who under the severe supervision of his father, a military officer and surgeon, was forced against his wishes first to attend a military academy, eventually becoming a soldier and subsequently enrolling in law and then medical schools, rather than being allowed to follow his own desire to study theology. Schiller's dramatic works in various ways illustrate the Romantic thesis of human nature struggling against the opposed forces of freedom and necessity, often personified in the form of rebellion against parental authority. The same theme of opposition between father and son is pursued in Schiller's 1787 play *Don Carlos*, concerning the son of Philip II of Spain, who is portrayed as embroiled in conflict between his inclinations for love and active involvement in the affairs of state. The play was much admired by later writers and composers, and became the basis for Giuseppe Verdi's opera of the same name almost a century later. Schiller's famous poem "Ode to Joy" of 1785 was similarly set to music by Ludwig van Beethoven as the memorable theme of the choral movement of the Ninth Symphony. During his career as historian, Schiller wrote a well-regarded *History of the Thirty-Years War*, combining his lifelong preoccupations with history and religion, and in 1788, *The Revolt of the Netherlands*. His later plays in other ways explored the topic of opposition to authority, including the trilogy *Wallenstein* (1796–99), *Maria Stuart* (1800), *The Maid of Orleans* (1801), *The Bride of Messina* (1803) and *Wilhelm Tell* (1803).

Schiller's philosophical aesthetics came to fruition in the 1790s under Kant's influence. His reflections were nurtured by first-hand experience as a literary artist of philosophical inclination, and his poems, letters and essays of this period represent an effort to bring to sharper theoretical focus the problems of individual freedom that he had fictionalized especially in his theater productions. Schiller's double life as artist and professor sustains his philosophical research into the foundations of the Romantic movement to which he contributed. Schiller, like Kant, wants art to have a moral dimension. Schiller, however, does not accept Kant's concept of moral freedom interpreted as reason's transcendental autonomy in adopting its own principle of action in the form of the categorical imperative. Schiller is instead committed to a more meaningful and immediate sense of freedom that can stand against the tyranny of law and social conformity. Schiller likewise rebels against the moralizing pedantry of Kant's aesthetic philosophy. Kant's analytic of the sublime in nature, interpreted as leading the mind by implication to contemplate the infinity of

God rather than for its own sake as an intrinsic aesthetic value, is deplorable to Schiller, as it was also to Schopenhauer. Schiller insists on understanding the value of art on its own terms for the role it plays in adding meaning and color to our lives, even when its secondary purpose is to condition citizens for participation in a morally elevated political state. Schiller recounts that his interest in aesthetics was awakened by Kant's remark that art in comparison with other types of work might be considered as playful. Schiller nevertheless consistently emphasizes love of God and the joyful expression of the spirit in art rather than Kant's frequent references to duty, obedience and subservience to law. The law, indeed, for Schiller, whether of nature, custom or social institution, is the great opponent of the soul's free flight that finds its wings in art more than in any other human activity.

Among his philosophical predecessors, Schiller is as profoundly indebted to Fichte as to Kant. There are several significant references to Fichte (1992) in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* and elsewhere in Schiller's essays and letters on aesthetics. Schiller is particularly influenced by Fichte's concept of the complex interaction between subject and object in the account of artistic appreciation, and Fichte's distinction between "pure ego" and "empirical ego" is imported into Schiller's theory in the fourth and thirteenth letters respectively as "person" and "condition." The human person or self is that which persists, while the determining condition is constantly changing. These two complementary realms of being are distinct in the phenomenal order of finite being, but united as one entity in Absolute being. The motivations of persons as finite beings are in turn distinguishable as two opposing "drives." Schiller considers the "material" (also "physical" or "sensual") drive as inclining persons in their tasks toward the goal of realizing physical reality, and the otherwise opposed "formal" or "rational" drive as moving persons toward abstract formal reality. While these two drives are ordinarily in conflict, Schiller maintains that a third "play drive" adds something new to the equation. The play drive integrates active and passive forces in a union of feeling or emotion and reason, the sensuous and rational, in the aesthetic ideal that unites formal, rational and physical sensuous beauty. The freedom of individual persons is realized for Schiller only when the material and rational drives are properly harmonized, so that the two alike can be expressed under the appropriate conditions, without being constrained by either. Thus, it is the play drive in Schiller's aesthetic philosophy that mediates between material and formal drives and effects a transcendence of the opposition between material and formal drives, weaving together sensuous and rational states of mind in aesthetic education.

As a writer of literature rather than a theoretical philosopher, but also to a limited extent in his philosophical inquiries, Schiller's greatest debt within the Weimer circle in which he flourished is undoubtedly to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The view championed in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, that a benevolent moral state can only be attained by passing beyond an animal physical condition through a transition of heightened aesthetic sensitivity, is Schiller's unique addition to nineteenth-century German idealism and Romanticism. Inklings of the theory can nevertheless be traced to Goethe and the great classical humanistic tradition beginning in the earlier part of this period of the eighteenth-century German Enlightenment. Schiller in this spirit maintains that, despite the intrinsic value of art, an aesthetic

education is not an end in itself, but a process through which humankind needs to pass in order to return to its true essence, at which point we will have attained the necessary freedom whereby we can make of ourselves whatever we find appropriate under prevailing circumstances, safeguarded by the tempering of spirit that a refinement of aesthetic sensibility provides.

Schiller's concept of aesthetic education must be understood against the historical background of the French Revolution, whose Reign of Terror utterly repulsed Kant and other thinkers of the period, including Schiller. Schiller denounces the excesses of the time as acts that could never conceivably be committed by persons who have had their aesthetic consciousnesses properly enlightened. It is not merely that the rabble that led the aristocracy in France to the guillotine was aesthetically uncouth, but that it could not be expected to have acted otherwise, because morality, for Schiller, can only be preceded by an appreciation of beauty. He insists that if the spirit is once made familiar with higher aesthetic values, it enjoys an absolute freedom that is incompatible with inhumane acts of violence. Schiller thus holds out the greatest hope for humankind, a sense in which he is a convinced optimist in stark opposition to Schopenhauer's insuperable moral pessimism. Schiller believes that there is a definite course of moral self-improvement through aesthetics, in a series of specific steps for the individual that can eventually have a positive moral influence upon the entire political state.

Schiller's way of navigating between the German idealist shoals of freedom and necessity is to argue that freedom arises from a conflict of necessities and that it implies a kind of moral freedom with its own laws concerning the play drive. Schiller accordingly argues that freedom is the "mother" of all art. If art in its most general terms is considered as a way of living, the art or style by which anything and everything is done, then an artful aesthetic life is productive not only of art in the ordinary sense, but, as Schiller maintains, of individual moral choices and a political atmosphere in which the natural chaotic state of nature is transformed into a moral and rational state as the ultimate "human ideal." The atrocities of the French Revolution are supposed in turn to be unthinkable under such circumstances, incapable of occurring in an ideal future state. We might wonder, despite these assurances, whether the abuses of power by the aristocracy in France that finally erupted in plebeian violence would never have transpired in the first place if the ruling elite had undergone the proper Schillerian aesthetic education. The problem is that one could hardly complain that privileged members of the House of Bourbon did not enjoy a refined aesthetic sensibility by the European standards of Schiller's day. Admittedly, the royals probably did not enjoy quite the sort of philosophical aesthetic education that Schiller has in mind; yet the question of whether aesthetic education of any kind is guaranteed to produce the moral sensibility and will to act upon it that Schiller requires remains provocative but inconclusive.

Schiller's most enduring and direct philosophical contribution to aesthetic practice is contained in *On the Naive and Sentimental in Literature* (1981). Here Schiller is firmly rooted in the naive perception and poetic description of the natural world in Goethean classicism while looking ahead to the modern trend of introspection and self-consciousness that at the time was referred to as "sentimentalism." Schiller rejects a neoclassical return to "Arcadia" in the essay, which some critics were then

endorsing. Instead, he advocates a synthesis of naive and sentimental poetry that he characterizes as "Elysium," an ideal future state of beautified humanity that combines both an appreciation for natural beauty in nature externally perceived and the inward beauty subjectively discovered in edifying feelings of beauty and the good.

Schelling

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1854) is the last of the three great post-Kantian philosophers, who, with Hegel and Fichte, is frequently associated with the heyday of German idealism. Schelling, among the three, is more closely aligned with Schiller, whose emphasis on freedom and passion placed him squarely in the vanguard of late nineteenth-century German aesthetic Romanticism.

Like Schiller, Schelling was a professor at Jena, but of philosophy rather than history. Schelling is often criticized for inconstancy if not inconsistency in his philosophical peregrinations, passing from his first fascination with the work of Hegel and Fichte, to the pantheistic rationalism of Spinoza, to Neoplatonism and finally to the religious mysticism of Jakob Böhme. Hegel was at first considered to be Schelling's protégé, but eventually eclipsed his colleague. Schelling's metaphysics represents an open-minded search for philosophical guidance from multiple sources rather than mere fickle experimentation with ideas.

Schelling's philosophical development is usually divided into four main phases: (1) subjective idealism; (2) philosophy of nature; (3) metaphysics of identity; and (4) theory of the opposition of the positive and negative. Schelling's first phase was powerfully influenced by Fichte (1992) and Spinoza (2000), particularly by Fichte's egoistic world-constituting idealism, with which Schelling struggled and sought increasingly to surmount in advancing his own metaphysics and theory of knowledge. Schelling's philosophy in the first period is not especially innovative, yet it testifies to his early predominant interest in aesthetics as the key to understanding the phenomenal world as a divine artwork (Schelling 1980, 1989). In its second phase, Schelling's philosophy of nature gains ascendancy, in the sense that, contrary to Fichte's subjective idealism, he now urges that the world of nature exists objectively and independently of the ego (Schelling 1988). Rather like Goethe's classical naturalism, by which it was probably inspired, Schelling in his naturalist phase holds that physical processes can be understood in terms of opposed forces of attraction and repulsion. As a way of overcoming Fichte's idealism, Schelling proposes that attraction is objective and repulsion is subjective. These natural forces are interpreted as, respectively, matter and ego, which in turn are understood as metaphysically complementing and existing independently of one another. The duality of nature and knowledge is dismantled in Schelling's third phase, and the two factors are brought together in what is usually characterized as his philosophy of identity (Schelling 1978). Turning toward a kind of mystical rationalism in this period, Schelling came to think of subject and object, perception and nature, as indistinguishable in a unitary infinite reason that merges thing-in-itself with intuitive knowledge. The identity theory entails a kind of pantheism that is reminiscent of Schelling's sustained involvement with the philosophy of Spinoza, whose *more geometrico* or axiomatic manner of

presenting metaphysical ideas in the *Ethics* Schelling also imitated in this period (Spinoza 2000). The fourth phase of Schelling's philosophy develops a conception of freedom that descends even more deeply into mysticism through a sense of the beautiful in nature and art that ultimately identifies religion, revelation and aesthetic appreciation, and interprets all knowledge as ideal presence and art, more particularly, as the presence of God (Schelling 1936). Schelling suggests that the first principle of metaphysics is divine being, which is no longer associated with reason as in Hegel (2001) or Fichte (1992), but with a striving to exist similar to Spinoza's theory of *conatus*, in effect an act of will directed toward bringing each individual into being.

Although Schelling was interested in ancient myths and folklore early in his career (having been introduced to their attractions by the early Romantic writer Johann Ludwig Tieck), it is in the fourth and final phase of philosophical development in his last fourteen years that his philosophy entered its most mystical and mythological stage. He sought clues in world mythologies at this time to what he understood to be a divine principle, the Absolute, similar in some ways to Hegel's concept, that he believes is manifested in every aspect of human history, and by reference to which he defines the positive philosophy to which his thinking evolved after 1809. It is in this period that Schelling articulated a theory of human persons as free creativity, which he further projects as the essence of the world. The most important and philosophically revealing freely creative activity is religious reflection artistically expressed in the fabrication of myths whose deeper meanings resonate with a primitive mystical recognition of fundamental dynamic oppositions in the phenomenal world.

Schelling's aesthetic philosophy treats all of nature literally, not merely metaphorically, as an artwork. He interprets history accordingly as a kind of drama and maintains that in the true work of art the artist's creative activity is teleological, the product of an artist's efforts. The resulting artwork as a consequence is potentially infinite in meaning and never fully understood even by the most philosophically astute artist or critic. Schelling nevertheless holds that it is in art alone that consciousness realizes its infinite potential in a concrete production, which unavoidably exceeds the limits of even the artist's ability to fully grasp its implications. For this reason, Schelling enigmatically declares that all intelligence strives for completion in art and that the teleology of consciousness finds its fulfillment only in great art. It further follows for Schelling that art alone is true philosophy, in which nature and history are mutually complemented, even though the artist, lacking the necessary theoretical explanatory framework, is not typically a philosopher. The Spinozistic and Neoplatonist three-part division of Schelling's middle and later aesthetic philosophy implies that theoretical philosophical consciousness explains the world. Practical intelligence and activity, on the other hand, organize and apply scientific knowledge of nature. Finally, it is aesthetic consciousness alone, according to Schelling – in a proposition that appears in some ways to revert to Fichte's subjective idealism – that is responsible for creating the world. What prevents this formulation from simply reverting to Fichte's subjective idealism is that Schelling in his mature philosophy no longer identifies consciousness or intelligence with the individual ego, but rather with the divine principle or Absolute of God's artistic creativity that makes aesthetics and religion one.

See also Plato (Chapter 1), Medieval aesthetics (Chapter 3), Kant (Chapter 5), Hegel (Chapter 6), Nietzsche (Chapter 8), Beauty (Chapter 29).

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8
NIETZSCHE

Ruben Berrios and Aaron Ridley

Friedrich Nietzsche, who was born in 1844, went mad in 1889 and died in 1900, took art more seriously, perhaps, than any other philosopher of comparable stature. All of his published works contain extended discussions of art, and if none of them is quite so explicitly devoted to it as his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche 1967a [1872]), this is not, as is commonly held, a sign that art lost its hold on him as his career progressed. Rather, it is a sign of the increasing depth and complexity of his aesthetics. Art became for Nietzsche a principle informing the whole of his philosophy. Relatively inconspicuous because of its very ubiquity, the aesthetic in his later works functions as the site on which Nietzsche's extra-aesthetic concerns are contested: a site that is continually transformed in the process, and so which can be understood only through those apparently extra-aesthetic concerns that animate the surface of his thought. Thus, while the younger Nietzsche effectively rams art down the reader's throat, most un-ignorably in his claim that "it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*" (Nietzsche 1967a: 52), the later Nietzsche is more elusive. In what follows, therefore, we will first examine Nietzsche's thoughts about art through his two principal extra-aesthetic concerns – metaphysics and ethics – before attempting to reconstruct the mature aesthetic as it underpins the writings of the late 1880s.

Art and metaphysics

The young Nietzsche was profoundly influenced by the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer and, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he gave full rein to the enthusiasm which Schopenhauer's metaphysics inspired in him. In Schopenhauer's hands, the Kantian distinction between the real world of things as they are in themselves and the apparent world of things as they feature in experience becomes the distinction between the Will and representations of the Will. The world, in its essence, is Will: a blind force which constantly strives for an unattainable resolution, and so serves merely to perpetuate further meaningless striving. The fundamental character of the world is therefore the pain of irreparable lack, and the multiple refractions of this character constitute the world of representation, or experience. Nietzsche found this bleak vision compelling, and constructed his earliest philosophy of art around it.

Two complementary principles, the "Dionysian" and the "Apollonian," dominate *The Birth of Tragedy*. Both of these can be understood under three aspects: the metaphysical, the epistemological and the aesthetic. Under the metaphysical aspect, the Dionysian is Nietzsche's term for the dark "primordial unity" (Nietzsche 1967a: 37) of things: in effect, the Schopenhauerian Will. Under the epistemological aspect, the Dionysian is a state of "intoxication," a state in which the deepest and most "horrible truth" (Nietzsche 1967a: 60) of the world is glimpsed – and can only be glimpsed, since to face it fully would destroy one. Under the aesthetic aspect, the Dionysian is what Kant meant by the "sublime," the overwhelming, awe-inspiring and yet elevating experience of things which exceed rational apprehension.

The Apollonian, by contrast, belongs to Schopenhauer's world of representation. Metaphysically, it stands for the false, the illusory, for "*mere appearance*" (Nietzsche 1967a: 34). Epistemologically, the Apollonian indicates a dreamlike state in which all knowledge is knowledge of surfaces. Aesthetically, the Apollonian is the beautiful, the world experienced as intelligible, as conforming to the capacities of the representing intellect. Nietzsche's basic claim is that in genuinely tragic works of art the Dionysian and the Apollonian principles cross-fertilize one another, so that the metaphysical horror of existence is simultaneously revealed and made bearable, the ravages of intoxication are transfigured by dreams, and the sublime is beautified by the veil of appearances. It is because tragedy (especially Greek tragedy), and tragedy alone, has the capacity to do this that "it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*" (Nietzsche 1967a: 52).

Nietzsche did not remain committed to this position for long. By 1878, when the first part of *Human, All Too Human* (Nietzsche 1986) was published, he had repudiated the strong appearance/reality distinction upon which Schopenhauerian metaphysics rests and which lay at the core of *The Birth of Tragedy*. For Schopenhauer, as for Kant, reality and its appearances had logically distinct properties, so that the way that the world was "in itself" was logically distinct from any of its appearances in experience. Nietzsche's rejection of this position – which is to say, his rejection of traditional metaphysics (Nietzsche 1966: 10) – had a number of consequences which he went on to articulate throughout the 1880s. Two of these are of concern to us here.

The first consequence is that the appearance/reality distinction had to be understood differently. "What is 'appearance' for me now?" Nietzsche asked in *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche 1974 [1882]). "Certainly not the opposite of some essence: what could I say about any essence except to name the attributes of its appearance! Certainly not a dead mask that one could place on an unknown *x* or remove from it!" (Nietzsche 1974: 116). And in the section of *Twilight of the Idols* (Nietzsche 1968a [1888]) called "How the 'Real World' at Last Became a Myth" he is more explicit still: "we have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps? … But no! *with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!*" (Nietzsche 1968a: 41). On this new conception, the appearance/reality distinction is not a distinction between two logically differentiated "worlds" – an apparent one and a real one – but a distinction that falls squarely within the ordinary, everyday world of actual experience.

The second consequence is that his aesthetics had to be rethought. Consider the following passage from *The Gay Science*: "as an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still *bearable* for us" (Nietzsche 1974: 163): a claim that echoes the slogan of *The Birth*

of Tragedy while also revising its sense in light of Nietzsche's new nonmetaphysical realism. "The world" has gone missing from the later passage, because "the world" of the original slogan was the "real" world, now abolished, of things as they are independently of their appearances. What is left is "existence" – not existence as such, but human existence as it is led in the everyday world of experience; and this is no longer to be "eternally justified" but merely made "bearable" – and made bearable, moreover, "for us." The idea of eternal justification has no room for "us" in it: no room, that is, for the points of view of intrinsically embodied, intrinsically temporal creatures such as ourselves. Eternal justification could be offered, if at all, only from a standpoint beyond the world of human experience, from a standpoint logically independent of the way that that world appears (to us) to be. Nietzsche's repudiation of traditional metaphysics insists upon precisely the impossibility of such a standpoint (see Nietzsche 1969b: 119). So the thought that "existence" might be "eternally justified" by the aesthetic gives way to the thought that it might be made "bearable *for us*" by the aesthetic.

The appearance/reality distinction has thus been transposed back into the real world of human experience. In order to acknowledge the human, all too human dimension of that transposition, moreover, Nietzsche now recasts the original distinction as a distinction between lies and truth (that is, as a distinction falling within the ambit of human discretion, rather than as a distinction marking a metaphysical difference). It is now the lie that performs the task of making life bearable. Art – "in which precisely the *lie* is sanctified and the *will to deception* has a good conscience" (Nietzsche 1969b: 153) – beautifies life by interposing a veil of lies between us and truths about the world that we cannot bear. Nietzsche has abandoned certain details of his earlier terminology, but it is clear that this later conception of art-as-lie is structurally identical to the Apollonian, even if its content has been thoroughly detranscendentalized. It is in this nonmetaphysical spirit that he remarks, in a famous unpublished note of 1888, that "we possess art lest we *perish of the truth*" (Nietzsche 1968b: 435).

Art and ethics

There is an important sense in which Nietzsche's ethical concerns did not undergo the sort of total transformation that his metaphysics did. Correspondingly, the relation between the ethical and the aesthetic in his thought remains a good deal more stable than does the relation between the metaphysical and the aesthetic. As he notes in one of the more reliable passages from the "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" (Nietzsche 1967a [1886]), *The Birth of Tragedy* already set out to "tackle" art in the perspective of life; and to the end of his career he remained committed to the thought that art was both a function and the most fundamental symptom of distinctive ways of living. To tackle art in the perspective of life, then, is to seek to understand art as a peculiarly immediate index of the psychological economy, whether cultural or individual, that gave rise to it. The following is a particularly trenchant expression of this methodology: "regarding all aesthetic values I now avail myself of this main distinction: I ask in every instance, 'is it hunger or superabundance that has here become creative?'" (Nietzsche 1974: 329).

In order to understand what is at issue here, and what exactly Nietzsche means, it will be helpful to examine a related passage in some detail:

> what does all art do, does it not praise? does it not glorify? does it not select? does it not highlight? By doing all this it *strengthens* or *weakens* certain valuations … Is this no more than an incidental? an accident? Something in which the instinct of the artist has no part whatever? Or is it not rather the prerequisite for the artist's being an artist at all … Is his basic instinct directed towards art, or is it not rather directed towards the meaning of art, which is *life*?
>
> (Nietzsche 1968a: 81)

The first thing to notice is the claim that, in selecting and highlighting, certain valuations are strengthened or weakened, not merely incidentally but necessarily. What sorts of valuations are these? Nietzsche's answer is that they are fundamentally of two sorts: life-affirming valuations and life-denying valuations, a dichotomy which he variously describes in terms of superabundance and hunger, ascending life and declining life, strength and weakness, health and sickness. Thus, in selecting and highlighting certain things rather than others, an artist both reveals his inherent evaluative stance towards life and, in glorifying or celebrating the things selected, strengthens that basic valuation (and so, by contrast, weakens its opposite). Nor does the artist have any choice in this matter. The evaluative stance which he reveals and reinforces in his work is, far from being "something in which the instinct of the artist has no part whatever," instinctive through and through, and it is in this evaluative sense that the artist's "basic instinct" is directed, not towards art, but towards "life." When Nietzsche asks, therefore, whether it is "hunger or superabundance that has here become creative" he is treating art as a symptom of the artist's relation to life, that is, as a symptom of the psychological economy intrinsic to a certain way of living.

The same fundamental evaluative dichotomy also underpins Nietzsche's conception of the various forms of morality, which are themselves treated as symptomatic of life-affirming or life-denying impulses. Thus Nietzsche groups moralities under two heads: "noble morality," he says, "is rooted in a triumphant Yes said to *oneself* – it is self-affirmation, self-glorification of life; it also requires sublime symbols and practices, but only because 'its heart is too full'" (Nietzsche 1967b: 191). "Slave morality," by contrast, "from the outset says No … and *this* No is its creative deed" (Nietzsche 1969b: 36). These opposing impulses – the affirmative and the negative – rarely sit on the surface of a morality, however. Rather, they are the deep causes of the surface effects that give moralities their distinctive characters, and they need to be excavated. Which is why Nietzsche claims that "moral judgement is never to be taken literally … But as *semiotics* it remains of incalculable value: it reveals … the most precious realities of cultures and inner worlds … Morality is merely sign-language, merely symptomatology" (Nietzsche 1968a: 55). With a keen enough nose, then, and Nietzsche credited himself with the keenest there has ever been (Nietzsche 1969a: 222), it is possible to detect behind the various systems of moral judgment the seminal Yes or No from which they derive their impetus.

So why is art, and not morality, the most fundamental symptom of a psychological economy? Why is art the "sign language" that reveals most transparently the "precious realities of cultures and inner worlds"? The answer to this is complex, but can be articulated through two overlapping considerations. The first concerns scope. Nietzsche construes the aesthetic very broadly. Art, for him, comprises more than merely "selecting" and "highlighting"; it comprises all "creation and imposition of forms." In the presence of an artist "something new soon arises, a ruling structure that *lives*, in which parts and functions are delimited and coordinated, in which nothing whatever finds a place that has not first been assigned a 'meaning' in relation to the whole" (Nietzsche 1969b: 86–87). Thus art includes any (and every) transformative, interpretative activity; and it is for this reason that Nietzsche insists that the moral domain is "narrower" than the aesthetic (Nietzsche 1967b: 190). Indeed, the moral is simply a special case of the aesthetic. Hence the aesthetic is the more comprehensive index of the "precious realities of cultures and inner worlds."

The second consideration concerns constraint, and comes in two parts. First, morality is practical. Moralities are constrained by the exigencies of the real world in a way that works of art are not. It is always a criticism of a morality, and Nietzsche avails himself of this style of criticism (see Nietzsche 1966: 153–54), to say that it demands the impossible, that it flouts the basic requirement that every moral "ought" implies a practical "can." There is no corresponding style of criticism in the aesthetic domain. Works of art are constrained, if at all, by the imagination alone. Therefore the fundamental affirmation or negation underlying a morality – its seminal instinct – is more likely to be disguised by the demands of practical necessity than the instinct underlying a work of art. Art, as Nietzsche puts it, has "forgotten all sense of shame" (Nietzsche 1967b: 156).

Moreover – and this is the second part – moralities have the form of constraint: every morality involves the regulation of behavior through the repression of (at least some) instincts (to at least some degree). At the lower limit, located by Nietzsche in the noble moralities of human prehistory, that form is minimal: his original nobles are held "sternly in check" only "by custom, respect, usage" (Nietzsche 1969b: 40). There is, in these "man–animals," the smallest degree of repression consistent with self-consciousness: with mutual intelligibility and the collective assignation of meaning. But as human societies become more complex, so too do the patterns of repression characteristic of their moralities, with the result that one needs a very keen nose indeed to detect the seminal instinct underlying their systems of judgment. In art, by contrast, formal minimalism is always possible. It is always possible, in principle, that the largest quantity of unrepressed instinct consistent with intelligibility should find expression. Nietzsche's distinction between "the grand style," indicative of "superabundance," and "miniaturism," indicative of "hunger," is intended to mark the difference between art that realizes this possibility and art that does not (Nietzsche 1968a: 74, and 1967b: 170). In this sense too, then, art is capable of indicating more transparently than any evolved morality the basic evaluative impulse from which it derives. As "semiotics" morality may be of "incalculable value." But art, according to Nietzsche, not only reveals more of the fundamental impulses he is concerned to diagnose (the aesthetic encompasses the moral), it also reveals them more directly.

There is a final reason for privileging art over morality. Nietzsche is convinced that life-denying moralities and interpretations (for instance, Christian ones) have had the upper hand in Western culture for so long that the human soul has been almost irreparably damaged by them. A seminal No (to oneself and the world) has become foundational to the economy of the contemporary psyche. And so he begins to imagine the possibility of an affirmative counter-art of the soul, a counter-art which – while it might, as it were epiphenomenally, entail a morality – is aimed primarily at the restoration to the human soul of a foundational Yes. These attempts to imagine a revolution in the economy of the contemporary psyche constitute one important aspect of Nietzsche's mature aesthetic.

The mature aesthetic

Nietzsche's later philosophy is directed to the possibility of an affirmative evaluative stance toward life as lived in the real, nonmetaphysical world of experience, embodiment and temporality. A well-known passage from 1882 prepares the ground:

> O*ne thing is needful*. – To "give style" to one's character – a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan … Here a large mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed – both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime … For one thing is needful: that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself, whether it be by means of this or that poetry and art.
>
> (Nietzsche 1974: 232)

At first sight, it may appear that Nietzsche's idea of giving style to one's character amounts to little more than a recipe for complacent self-deception. But while it is certainly true that self-deception is involved, complacency is not the driving force behind it. Rather, people of stylish character begin with a ruthlessly honest survey of the strengths and weaknesses of their nature: they "open their eyes to themselves" (Nietzsche 1969b: 137) before executing their "artistic plan." The artistry of self-stylization then takes two forms. The first is transformative. Through the addition and removal of "second" and "original" nature, respectively, the very materials of character are forced into an aesthetic unity. The second is interpretative. Those materials which prove resistant to transformation are reinterpreted so that their ugliness is concealed, perhaps by the veil of sublimity.

Despite the fact that these two forms of artistry are directed towards, and indeed expressive of, self-affirmation, the practice of them is grueling. Style, if it is achieved at all, is hard won:

> This secret self-ravishment, this artists' cruelty, this delight in imposing a form upon oneself as a hard, recalcitrant, suffering material and in burning a will … into it, this uncanny, dreadfully joyous labor of a soul voluntarily

> at odds with itself … brought to light an abundance of strange new beauty and affirmation, and perhaps beauty itself. – After all, what would be "beautiful" … if the ugly had not first said to itself: "I am ugly"?
>
> (Nietzsche 1969b: 87–88)

Self-stylization, then, requires that one be ruthless with oneself both in recognizing one's own ugliness and in transforming or reinterpreting it. "Truth is ugly," says Nietzsche; and so – again – "we possess art lest we *perish of the truth*."

The first thing to notice about Nietzsche's conception of self-stylization, then, is that it is not a recipe for complacency. In order to understand its full significance, however, it will be helpful to examine the interpretative and the transformative aspects of self-stylization separately. Interpretatively, the notion of giving style to one's character is tied to deception: specifically, to the telling of lies to oneself about oneself and one's relation to the world, so that recalcitrant facts about either are rendered bearable. Take, for example, the large and recalcitrant fact of human suffering. Uninterpreted, Nietzsche thinks, suffering is intolerable. It is the "senselessness of suffering," he claims, rather than "suffering as such" that "really arouses indignation." The challenge, then, is to interpret suffering – to tell lies about suffering – in such a way that it appears, not as "the principal argument *against* existence," but as "a genuine seduction *to* life." Historically, Nietzsche claims, this challenge has been met in two main ways. "The Christian, who has interpreted a whole mysterious machinery of salvation into suffering," makes suffering bearable by positing the existence of a Kingdom of God, of a metaphysically "real" world in which those who suffer most in this ("apparent") world are duly compensated; and it is in the context of this "machinery" that the Christian's self-stylization takes place: he construes himself as an immortal soul. The pagan, on the other hand, "understood all suffering in relation to the spectator of it … [and] knew of no tastier spice to offer [his] gods to season their happiness than the pleasures of cruelty" – "Every evil the sight of which edifies a god is justified" (Nietzsche 1969b: 68–69). The stylish pagan interprets himself as an actor, as a spectator sport.

Despite the apparent similarity of these two approaches – both, for instance, involve reference to the divine – they are, for Nietzsche, radically distinct. The "seduction to life" offered by the Christian is predicated, paradoxically, upon a seminal No *to* life: the pointfulness of this-worldly suffering is secured only by locating the value of that suffering elsewhere, in a realm that necessarily excludes temporality and embodiment, and so excludes life itself. It is in this sense that "the concept of 'God,'" according to Nietzsche, has been "invented as a counter-concept of life" (Nietzsche 1969a: 334). The life to which the Christian offers a "seduction" is, to the extent that it is characterized by suffering, worth living only on the presupposition that it is, as such, of no intrinsic value at all. Thus, in Nietzsche's terms, the Christian's version of "life" is doubly unacceptable: metaphysically, because it presupposes the type of appearance/reality distinction that the late Nietzsche rejects, and ethically, because it is a life-denying symptom of fundamental impoverishment. The pagan, by contrast, has "*nobler* uses for the invention of gods," as is "revealed even by a mere glance at the *Greek gods*, those reflections of noble and autocratic men" (Nietzsche 1969b: 93) who repaid their gods "with interest all the qualities that

had become palpable in themselves, the *noble* qualities" (ibid.: 89). A pagan "god," then, is, far from being a "counter-concept of life," a "deifi[cation] of life" (ibid.: 154), an "invention" through which the pagan affirms himself and his way of living as uniquely valuable. The pagan's interpretation of suffering, therefore, is a life-affirming – metaphysically harmless – symptom of superabundance. Both Christian and pagan fashion themselves (as immortal soul or actor) in the context of lies (about God or the gods), and both, thereby, turn the fact of suffering to account. But whereas the Christian's lies spring from hunger, and involve the negation of the very conditions of life, the pagan's lies spring from "life and passion through and through" (ibid.: 37).

The transformative aspect of self-stylization, by contrast, involves not invention, but the concrete alteration of the materials of character. One imposes a new form upon oneself, extracting certain character traits while reshaping and implanting others. As with interpretation, two modes of self-transformation can be distinguished: one life-affirming or "noble," the other life-denying. Nietzsche claims that man (noble man) "transforms things until they reflect his power – until they are reflections of his perfection" (Nietzsche 1968a: 72). In the case of self-transformation, the noble imposes upon himself a form that is both a symptom and an expression of his native power, his abundance of life. Through his self-transformative activity, the "noble human being" honors and affirms "himself as one who is powerful, also as one who has power over himself" (Nietzsche 1966: 205). Since the "*need* to transform into perfection is – art," the noble's need to perfect himself is, for Nietzsche, the fundamental manifestation of the artistic instinct. There is, however, a "contrasting condition, a specific anti-artistry of the instinct," a type of transformation that impoverishes things, and makes them "consumptive" (Nietzsche 1968a: 72). This is the life-denying variety of self-transformation. Like the noble, the life-denier imposes upon himself – with the utmost severity – a new form; but, unlike the noble, he employs his powers of transformation to:

> block up the wells of power … All this is in the highest degree paradoxical: we stand before a discord that wants to be discordant … and even grows more self-confident and triumphant the more its own presupposition, its physiological capacity for life, decreases.
>
> (Nietzsche 1969b: 118)

Thus the thought of self-stylization in both its interpretative and transformative aspects constitutes Nietzsche's attempt to imagine how, despite the seminal No which, in his view, underlies so much of contemporary culture, an affirmative evaluative stance toward life as lived in the real world of experience might nonetheless be possible. There is no doubt that Nietzsche draws encouragement from history, or from his version of history: his pre-Christian nobles and pagans exhibit very much the styles of character that he is after. Equally, however, he is in no doubt that those styles cannot simply be transposed into contemporary conditions. Modernity, he thinks, is "an age of disintegration" in which "human beings have in their bodies the heritage of multiple origins, that is, opposite … drives and value standards that fight each other" (Nietzsche 1966: 111), so that "today there is perhaps no more decisive mark of a '*higher nature*,' a more spiritual nature, than that of being divided in this sense and

a genuine battleground of these opposed values," that is, of life-affirming and life-denying valuations (Nietzsche 1969b: 52).

> When the opposition and war in such a nature have the effect of one more charm and incentive of life, however and if, moreover, in addition to powerful and irreconcilable drives, a real mastery and subtlety in waging war against oneself, in other words, self-control, self-outwitting, has been inherited or cultivated – then those magical, incomprehensible, and unfathomable ones arise, those enigmatic people predestined for victory and seduction, whose most beautiful expression is found … among artists perhaps [in] Leonardo da Vinci.
>
> (Nietzsche 1966: 112)

If history gives Nietzsche encouragement that affirmative self-stylization is possible, and if modernity presents that possibility with its sternest challenge, then the vague and rather hyperbolic quality of his invocation of Leonardo suggests that, for Nietzsche at least, it is uncertain that that challenge either has been, or really can be, met. Perhaps "those enigmatic men," those imagined counter-artists of the soul, are actually only Nietzsche's best hope for the future. Certainly any such counter-artist will need great strength of spirit in order to make good the claim, as Nietzsche requires, that it is only "as an aesthetic phenomenon" that a detranscendentalized existence might yet prove "*bearable*."

Nietzsche is unique among philosophers in the fundamental role he assigns to the aesthetic. For him, indeed, life itself (whether "*bearable*" or not) is an essentially aesthetic phenomenon. The aesthetic, as we have seen, comprises all "creation and imposition of forms," while "the essence of life" consists in those "spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, form-giving forces that give new interpretations and directions" (Nietzsche 1969b: 79). Thus his investigations of metaphysics and ethics (and indeed of science and politics) are, to the extent that those activities involve the creation and imposition of forms, also, and perhaps even primarily, investigations into the underlying aesthetic current of which such activities are strictly the epiphenomena. It is in this sense that, as we said at the outset, art functions as a principle informing the whole of Nietzsche's later philosophy; and it is in this sense, too, that the mature aesthetic is, because deep, elusive. These characteristics of Nietzsche's investigations ensure that the aesthetic in his hands is not merely not relegated to the periphery of philosophy, but is revealed as inextricably bound up with the nature of philosophy itself.

See also Kant (Chapter 5), Hegel (Chapter 6), Idealism (Chapter 7), Art and ethics (Chapter 38), Tragedy (Chapter 40), Style (Chapter 43).

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9
FORMALISM

Noël Carroll

The term "formalism" can refer to many different things. In art criticism, it has been used to refer to the important writings of Clement Greenberg (1961); in literary history, it has been associated with the influential school of Russian formalism; and in art history it has been used to refer to the writings of Alois Riegl (1992) and Heinrich Wolfflin (1950). For the purposes of this chapter, however, attention will be paid to its usage in philosophical aesthetics, where "formalism" denotes a position on the nature of art which has important implications for the limits of artistic appreciation.

Historically, the formalist position finds two of its strongest early polemical statements in Eduard Hanslick's *On the Musically Beautiful* (Hanslick 1986), first published in 1854, and in Clive Bell's *Art* (1914). In both cases, it is possible to see formalism as a historically situated response to significant artworld developments: to the triumph of absolute or pure orchestral music, on the one hand, and to the emergence of modern painting, on the other hand. Both books signaled a revolution in taste with regard to their respective art forms. Hanslick questioned whether *all* music trafficked in the arousal of garden-variety or everyday emotions (such as fear, anger and joy) and argued instead that the proper object of musical attention should be musical structure. Bell denied that painting was an affair of representation and of the emotions associated with the representation of events, places and people, and in contrast maintained that the real subject of painting was what he called significant form: the play of striking arrangements of lines, colors, shapes, volumes, vectors and space (two-dimensional space, three-dimensional space and the interaction thereof).

Bell's statement of the formalist position has been particularly important for the development of philosophical aesthetics in the twentieth century. Perhaps the leading reason for Bell's influence has been the fact that he connected his version of formalism with the project of advancing an explicit definition of art. For this reason, Bell can be considered one of the major forerunners of the twentieth century's philosophical obsession with discovering an essential definition of art.

According to Bell, we "gibber" if we do not base our theories and prognostications about art and its relevant forms of appreciation in an explicit definition of art. Unless we establish what art is, what we say about the value and importance of art, and what we think we should attend to in artworks, will be wildly off the mark. We will, from his point of view, go on blathering about the drama and anecdote of

something like Poussin's *Achilles among the Daughters of Lycomedes*, rather than attending to its pictorial structures.

As a result, Bell is eminently straightforward about what, in essence, he takes painting-as-an-artwork to be. Essentially, it is significant form. That is, where a painting is a genuine artwork, it addresses the imagination like the figures of Gestalt psychology, prompting the viewer to apprehend it as an organized configuration of lines, colors, shapes, spaces, vectors and the like.

Bell's conception of painting is a rival to other general theories of art. Bell rejects the traditional view that the art of painting is essentially an imitation of nature, a practice defined by a commitment to verisimilitude: to the production of recognizable depictions of persons, places, actions and events. Bell, of course, does not deny that many paintings are representations, but he argues that where paintings qualify as art, that is due to their possession of something other than their representational content. It is due to their possession of significant form. Indeed, according to Bell, whether or not an artwork possesses representational content is always *strictly* irrelevant to its status as an artwork. That is, a painting's being a painting of a horse counts not at all towards its classification as a work of art; only its possession of significant form, if it has any, does.

Similarly, though less explicitly, Bell's theory contrasts with expression theories of art, which maintain that what makes something art is its expression of the emotions of its creator. For Bell believes that a painting, such as a neo-Impressionist still life by Cézanne, can be remarkable for its invention of an arresting formal design, while expressing no detectable garden-variety emotions.

With Bell, formalism found its natural home in the realm of painting. Nevertheless, it is easy to extend his view to the other arts. Obviously, most orchestral music is not representational. This was always a vexation for philosophers in the lineage of Plato and Aristotle, who supposed that all art is essentially representational. But it scarcely seems controversial to describe music, especially after the popularization of pure orchestral music, in terms of the temporal play of aural form. In dance in the twentieth century, due to the influential writings of critics like André Levinson (1991), a kind of formalism not unlike Bell's came to be a leading position with regard to ballet, while in modern architecture the idea of form became a shibboleth.

Literature might appear to be a more intractable art form to explicate exclusively in terms of form. However, formalists can point to the centrality of features in poetry like meter, rhyme and generic structures (such as the sonnet *form*), while stories also possess formal features, such as narrative structures and alternating points of view, which theorists can claim lay at the heart of the literary experience. Such formalists, of course, cannot deny that most literature possesses representational content. Instead formalists, notably the Russian formalists, argue that such content only serves to motivate literary devices, and add that ultimately it is the play of literary devices that accounts for the artistic status of poems, novels, dramas and the like: at least in the cases where the works in question are artworks.

Thus the kind of formalism that Bell introduces with reference to fine art (notably painting and sculpture) can be (and has been) turned into a comprehensive theory of art, a competitor to other major philosophies of art, such as the representational theory of art and the expression theory of art. Where those philosophies maintain

respectively that art is essentially representation or that it is by its very nature expressive, the formalist says that art is form. Or, to state the matter more precisely, anything *x* is an artwork if and only if *x* possesses significant form. The possession of significant form is a necessary condition for status as an artwork: that is, something is an artwork *only if* it possesses significant form. And significant form is a sufficient condition for status as an artwork: *if* something possesses significant form, then it is an artwork.

To take something of a departure from Bell, it is possible to reconstruct a series of initially compelling arguments in support of formalism. The formalist alleges that a candidate is an artwork only if it possesses significant form; this is a necessary condition. But why suppose that this is so? Here the formalist mobilizes what can be called the *common denominator* argument.

The common denominator argument begins with the unobjectionable presupposition that if anything is to count as a necessary condition for art status, then it must be a property possessed by every artwork. This is just what it means to be a necessary condition. Next the formalist invites us to consider some of the leading competing proposals for the role of necessary criteria for art status. The two which are most relevant for the formalist debate are that something is art only if it is representational, and that something is art only if it is expressive.

However, not all artworks are representational. The bejeweled patterns on Islamic funeral monuments, Bach's fugues and Ellsworth Kelly's wall sculptures are all pertinent examples here. They are not representational but they are undeniably art. Thus it cannot be the case that representation is a necessary condition for status as an artwork.

Similarly, not all art is expressive of the emotions of its creator. Some artists, like John Cage, have adopted aleatoric methods of composition in order to remove any trace of authorial expression from their work. Many of George Balanchine's abstract ballets also attempt to erase expressive qualities for the sake of exploring pure formal qualities. Thus expression is not a necessary condition for status as an artwork.

That leaves us with form as the most viable candidate. Moreover, though we have reached this conclusion indirectly by negating the most prominent competing alternatives, the result, it might be said, rings true directly, since all artworks do seem at the very least to possess form. It appears obvious that form is the common denominator among all artworks, the property that they all share whether their medium is painting, sculpture, drama, photography, film, music, dance, literature, architecture or whatever. In searching for a necessary condition for art status, we are looking for a property possessed by every artwork. Formalism seems to make the most promising proposal, especially in contrast to rival theories like representationalism and expressionism.

The common denominator argument suggests that form is the most plausible contender we can find for a necessary condition of art status. But this argument does not provide us with a sufficient condition for art status, since many things other than art also possess form. Indeed, some might argue that in some sense everything possesses form. That, of course, is why the formalist speaks of *significant* form. But even with this ostensible refinement, it is still not the case that the formula "*x* is art only if it possesses significant form" will differentiate art from many other things. An effective

political speech and a theorem in symbolic logic may possess significant form, but they are not art. In order to block such counterexamples, and to establish the sufficiency of the theory, the formalist needs to add something to his or her view. Here the formalist may advert to an hypothesis about the *function* of artworks.

Political speeches and theorems in logic may possess significant form, but it is not their primary purpose to display their form. The primary function of a political speech is to convince an audience. The primary function of a logical theorem is to deduce a conclusion. Speechmaking and logic may result in activities noteworthy for their form, but exhibiting their form is not what they are primarily about. If they lacked significant form, they could still be extremely successful in acquitting their primary functions. Art is different from these and other activities insofar as it is, so the formalist hypothesizes, uniquely concerned with displaying significant form.

No other human activity, the formalist alleges, has the exhibition of form as its special or peculiar province of value. Its primary preoccupation with the exploration of form demarcates the realm of art from other human practices. Whereas representational content is not irrelevant to political speeches or logical deductions, representation is always, the formalist says, strictly irrelevant to artworks.

Likewise, though artworks may express the emotions, other things, such as battle cries, do so as well. However, artworks can be differentiated from battle cries if one supposes that the primary function of art is to exhibit significant form, since battle cries are not uttered in order to foreground their rhythmic structures.

Artworks may be concerned with religious or political themes, moral education, philosophical worldviews, or martial emotions. But so are many other things. Indeed, many other things, including sermons, pamphlets, newspaper editorials and philosophical treatises generally do a better job of conveying cognitive and moral information and emotional contagion than does art. What is special about art above all else, according to the formalist, is its concern with discovering formal structures that are designed to encourage our imaginative interplay with artworks.

The claim that the primary function of art is the exhibition of significant form can be worked into what we can call the *function* argument. This argument is designed to establish that the exhibition of significant form is a sufficient condition for status as an artwork. The argument presupposes that only if *x* is a primary function that is unique to art can it be a sufficient condition for status as an artwork. As in the case of the common denominator argument, the formalist then goes on to canvass the relevant alternatives: representation, expression and the exhibition of significant form. As we have already seen, neither representation nor expression are unique functions of artworks. Other activities also share these functions. But the exhibition of significant form is a primary function unique to art. Therefore, it is a sufficient criterion of art status.

Along with the function argument and the common denominator argument, formalism also gains credibility from its apparent capacity to explain certain of our intuitions about art. For example, we often criticize certain films for being too message-oriented, while commending other films for being good of their kind. Why is this? The formalist has a ready answer: a dumb, amoral film may be formally interesting – it may deploy its formal devices (editing, camera movement, color schemes and so on) – in compelling ways. In many such films, the thematic content is negligible, or even

silly, but its formal organization is riveting, whereas a film with a big idea, however important and earnestly expressed, may strike us as altogether, as they say, uncinematic. Formalism makes sense of comparative judgments like these.

Likewise, formalism explains why we regard much of the art of the past as worthwhile despite the fact that the sentiments it expresses and the ideas it represents are now known to be obsolete. This contrasts with physics, where discredited theories are long forgotten and rarely consulted. The formalist explains this phenomenon by reminding us that the primary function of physics is to give us knowledge about the universe. The information contained in many past artworks is believed to be wrong, but nevertheless we still read Lucretius's *On the Nature of Things*, the formalist hypothesizes, because of its evident formal virtues.

Because of its explanatory power and because of arguments like the common denominator and the function arguments, formalism is an appealing view. For those who expect an essential definition in response to the question "What is art?" it provides a tidy response: *x* is an artwork if and only if *x* is primarily designed in order to possess and to exhibit significant form. (Note: the inclusion of "designed" in this formula is intended to differentiate art from nature.) Additionally, formalism has important implications about art appreciation, properly so-called.

If the essential, art-making characteristic of a work is its possession and exhibition of significant form, then the pertinent object of our attention to an artwork qua art is significant form. Artworks may contain other features, such as representation and garden-variety emotions, but these are incidental and strictly irrelevant to their status as artworks. Thus, when it comes to appreciating artworks, attention should be focused exclusively on their formal properties.

Formalism has been an influential doctrine. For decades schoolchildren were taught not to let their attention wander away from the text: not to allow their concentration to become caught up in the story's relation to real life, rather than to savor its formal organization and features (for example, its unity, complexity and intensity). But formalism does not simply advocate certain protocols for aesthetic experience. It also attempts to ground those protocols in an ambitious philosophical theory.

According to formalism, the intended primary function of exhibiting significant form is a necessary condition for art status. But this cannot be right. Many of our greatest works of art were produced with patently different primary intentions, such as many military monuments whose primary function was to commemorate great victories. In response, the formalist may attempt to modify this condition, arguing that an artwork is something that has *among* its primary functions the exhibition of significant form. But this too seems unlikely.

Modern art is full of examples of what are called found objects, or ready-made objects, such as Duchamp's *Why Not Sneeze?* These ordinary objects are selected and put forward as artworks in order to provoke conceptual insights. Frequently, such objects are chosen expressly because of their palpable lack of what can be called significant form. Inasmuch as these found objects are art, it cannot be the case that the exhibition of significant form is a necessary condition for art status.

Moreover, counterexamples to the formalist thesis can also be located in traditional art. Many cultures produce statues of demon figures whose intended function

is to frighten intruders who wander into forbidden precincts. Such figurines are art, coveted by museums and collectors alike. But it is unimaginable that their creators could have in any way intended them as vehicles for the exhibition of significant form. Such an intention would be at odds with their intention to scare off viewers. So, once again we must conclude that the intended function of exhibiting significant form cannot be a necessary condition for art status.

Is it a sufficient condition, however? Here let us return to the case of the theorem from symbolic logic. Such theorems may possess significant form. The formalist, however, maintains that they are not artworks, because the exhibition of significant form is not among their intended primary functions. However, consider the case of a theorem whose proof has already been established, but by means of a lengthy or cumbersome set of steps. Suppose some logician decides to find a more elegant way of solving the problem, and succeeds in doing so. "Elegance" is surely a formal property, and in this case the point of the exercise is that the theorem in question possess and exhibit formal beauty. The formalist would appear to be compelled to recognize this as an artwork, but this is a fallacious result. Thus, the intended function of exhibiting significant form is not a sufficient condition for art status.

Nor does our argument hinge on this one example. An athlete may have among his or her primary intentions the desire not only to win, but to do it with arresting visual style. And though a baseball catch can be a thing of nearly balletic beauty (and be intended as such), it is not a work of art. (If we refer to it in this way as we often do, we are, of course, only speaking metaphorically.)

If the intended exhibition of significant form is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for art status, what are we to make of the common denominator argument and the function argument? These arguments can be stated in ways that are logically valid, yet logically valid arguments can reach false conclusions when their premises are false. The problem with the common denominator and the function arguments is that both contain false or misleading premises.

The common denominator argument presupposes that the possession of either representational, expressive or formal properties constitutes a necessary condition for art status. This presupposition can be criticized from two different directions. First, it can be pointed out that this array of alternatives does not spell out all of the relevant options, and that consequently the argument lacks proper logical closure. Unless we know that these are the only candidates available as necessary conditions for art status, we have no reason to accept formalism as the result of an argument by elimination like this one. Furthermore, we have every reason to believe that there are other candidates, such as certain historical properties (Danto 1981) and/or institutional properties (Dickie 1984). These possibilities, especially given the consensus, as already discussed, that "found objects" can qualify as works of art, may be even more comprehensive than the exhibition of formal properties. Thus, the common denominator argument is false because one of its central premises misleadingly insinuates that it has exhausted all the pertinent alternatives.

A second frequently mentioned, though very different, line of objection to the common denominator argument is that it presupposes that there must be a necessary feature shared by all artworks. Followers of Ludwig Wittgenstein such as Morris Weitz (1956) have questioned this. Believing that all artworks necessarily possess a

common feature seems to be more an article of faith than an established fact. What we call art seems so very diverse. There are so many different art forms and so much variety within art forms. Why suppose that they share a single common property or even a single set of common properties? Is it plausible to suppose that John Cage's *4' 33"* has an essential property that corresponds to an essential feature of the Taj Mahal?

Bell said that we gibber if we cannot adduce a feature common to all artworks. But we apply many concepts, like the concept of game, in ordinary language without being able to name an essential property that every object that falls under the concept possesses. Many theories abound about how we are able to do this. Thus, we may not have to worry about gibbering if we deny that the concept of art is governed by necessary conditions. Moreover, if one agrees that one of the alternatives that should be added to the common denominator argument is the possibility that art has no necessary conditions, one may resist the conclusion that formalism is the obvious survivor of the sort of process of elimination the common denominator argument invites.

Similar problems beset the function argument. It too ignores the possibility that there may be no primary function (or set of primary functions) *unique* to art, as well as the possibility that the functions of art may reside somewhere other than in representation, expression or the exhibition of significant form. Thus, the function argument does not compel us to agree that the exhibition of significant form is a sufficient condition for art status.

Moreover, both the common denominator argument and the function argument, along with the general statement of the formalist definition of art, are plagued by a problem that we have so far left unremarked, namely that the concept of significant form that is the central term of the formalist's arguments and definition is regrettably indeterminate. Without some idea of the nature of significant form or some criteria for recognizing it, we must worry (stealing a line from Bell) that when we employ it, we gibber.

What exactly is significant form? The formalist gives us no way to discriminate between significant form and insignificant form. Formalists may give us examples of each, but no principles. What makes one juxtaposition of shapes significant and another not? We have no way to decide. Nor can it be said, as some say of art, that reliable criteria for applying significant form inhere in ordinary language, since "significant form" is not a term of ordinary usage, but a piece of jargon. Thus, obscurity lies at the heart of formalism; the theory turns out to be useless, because its central term is undefined.

The formalist might say that a work has significant form if it is arresting. But that is not enough, since a work can be arresting for reasons other than formal ones, or even in virtue of formal properties that are not significant in the formalist's sense: such as its unusual, all-over monotone color. How, without a characterization of significant form, will we know whether a work is arresting because it possesses significant form, rather than for some other reason?

Often formalists attempt to repair this shortcoming by saying that significant form is such that it causes a special mental state in the minds of viewers. But this is not a helpful suggestion unless the formalist can define that state of mind. Otherwise we

are left with one undefined concept posing as a definition of another, which is effectively equivalent to having no definition at all. Nor can the formalist say that significant form is that which causes the peculiar state of mind in percipients that is the apprehension of significant form, since such a definition is circular. We would already have to possess the concept of significant form in order to tell whether the mental state was indeed an apprehension of significant form.

It is impossible here to review all the different proposals – in terms of notions like aesthetic emotion and aesthetic experience – that formalists have attempted to craft in order to characterize the putative mental state that significant form is alleged to afford. To date, none of these has been anything less than controversial. Thus, at this point in time, the burden of proof falls to the formalist, since on the face of it it appears unlikely that there is a distinctive state of mind elicited by all and only artworks. That is, since there are so many different kinds of artwork that require all sorts of mental responses, it is doubtful that there is just one mental state which they all induce. Does a feminist novel really engender the same kind of mental state as a Fabergé egg? Is there really some uniform aesthetic experience elicited by all artworks? Until that question is answered positively, precisely and persuasively, the idea that significant form can be explicated by reference to aesthetic experience remains moot. But without such an answer, the notion of significant form is too vague to be credible.

Perhaps the most incendiary corollary of formalism is the idea that representational properties in artworks, whenever they appear in artworks, are strictly irrelevant to their status as art and to our appreciation of them as artworks. According to formalists, we must appreciate artworks in terms of their purely formal relationships, divorced from the claims and concepts of daily life. But this is a very unlikely doctrine, for the simple reason that what is called significant form frequently supervenes on the representational content of artworks.

In order to access the form of a novel – to track its unity and diversity, to appreciate its intensity or its lack thereof – we must attend to its representations of actions, places and characters. We must generally bring to the novel the kinds of schemas, scripts and folk psychology that cognitive scientists tell us we bring to the affairs of ordinary life. But if in order to admire the structure of oppositional relationships among the characters in a novel we must deploy the categories of ordinary life (such as what are called person schemas) to the states of affairs the novelist represents, then the notion that representation and its connection to ordinary experience is strictly irrelevant is grievously mistaken.

Furthermore, it is not difficult to extend observations like this to our apprehension of form in many historical, mythological, religious and otherwise narrative paintings and sculptures, since there too form often comes to light only in the shadows of representational content.

As a heuristic, formalism may be a useful pedagogical standpoint. It reminds us that it is important not to overlook the formal dimension of artworks. Artists spend an immense amount of energy designing the structures of artworks, and attending to the intelligence disclosed by the form of a work can be a rewarding source of satisfaction for readers, viewers or listeners. However, transforming this near-truism into a philosophy of art, as the formalist does, impoverishes rather than enriches our understanding of art.

See also Kant (Chapter 5), Definitions of art (Chapter 21), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Value of art (Chapter 28).

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10
PRAGMATISM

Richard Shusterman

Western modernity typically defines the aesthetic in opposition to the practical, describing it in terms of disinterestedness and lack of purpose. Though pragmatist philosophy contrastingly highlights practice and functionality, it nonetheless insists that the aesthetic dimension is crucially central not only for art and culture but also for philosophy, cognition and for life in general. Pragmatist aesthetics does not present a single, uniform system of doctrines to which all pragmatists subscribe without qualification. Like pragmatism as a whole, its tradition involves a multiplicity of voices that often converge on certain key themes. Perhaps the most crucial points of convergence are the centrality of embodied aesthetic experience and the way that such perceptual experience extends well beyond the circumscribed field of fine art to pervade manifold dimensions of life, action, thought and culture. Hence for pragmatism, aesthetics cannot be narrowly equated with the philosophy of art, especially when art is understood in the modern institutional sense of the established fine arts of high culture.

Pragmatist aesthetics received its first systematic formulation in John Dewey's classic *Art as Experience* (1934, see 1969–91a), but earlier American thinkers associated with pragmatism anticipated many of his central aesthetic ideas. Most notable here are the poet-essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson, the philosopher-psychologist William James and the African American philosopher and cultural critic Alain Locke. Before considering these four thinkers in detail, we should briefly note that C. S. Peirce (originator of not only pragmatism but also semiotics) formulated theories of interpretation, logic and ontology (e.g. the type/token distinction) that have influenced aesthetics in both the analytic and pragmatist traditions. Peirce also emphasized the immediately felt quality of experience (so important for aesthetics) as his first category of consciousness or "Firstness." Moreover, he made "Ethics dependent upon Esthetics," treating "the morally good … as a particular species of the esthetically good" (Peirce 1998: 142, 201). If "Ethics is the science of the method of bringing Self-Control to bear" in order to gain what we desire, "what one ought to desire … will be to make [one's] life beautiful, admirable. Now the science of the Admirable is true Esthetics" (Brent 1993: 49).

Four formative thinkers for pragmatist aesthetics

If Emerson, James, Dewey and Alain Locke together provide the most formative and substantive vision of pragmatist aesthetics, only Dewey formulated a systematic

treatise on aesthetics, and he did not label it explicitly pragmatist. Emerson predates the official founding of pragmatism and his identification with the movement is sometimes contested (Cavell 1998), though he is usually claimed as protopragmatist or forefather of the movement. In any case, Emerson's essays express most of the major aesthetic themes that John Dewey later expressed with more philosophical power and precision (Shusterman 1999). Dewey formulated his aesthetic theory rather late in his career, in *Art as Experience*, though some of his aesthetic ideas were earlier adumbrated in *Experience and Nature* (1925, rev. 1929, see Dewey 1969–91b).

Between Emerson and Dewey's *Art as Experience*, William James, in his trailblazing *Principles of Psychology*, advocated the pervasive and powerful role of aesthetic experience in the whole gamut of our mental life, suggesting that even one's choice of theories was largely determined by aesthetic factors. A man of great aesthetic taste and wide culture whose first career choice was painting, James balked at writing a philosophical treatise on aesthetics because he thought that philosophy's formal principles and discursive definitions necessarily fail to capture the crucial nameless aesthetic qualities of art that make all the difference in actual aesthetic experience. The same general definition or verbal category (e.g. novel, symphony, triptych, etc.), James argued, equally applies to works of genius and works of deadening dullness, yet "verbal formulas are all … [philosophical] aesthetics will give" (James 2000: 475–76; Shusterman 2011). Dewey praised James's *Principles of Psychology* as the only book that truly transformed the direction of this thought, freeing him from Hegelian idealism toward a more naturalistic, embodied understanding of mind. This Jamesian influence holds true for Dewey's aesthetics, which is largely based on philosophy of mind and focused on perception and experience. Dewey's *Art as Experience* originated in a series of lectures at Harvard to honor William James, and its seminal theory that aesthetic experience is essentially constituted by a nameless, unifying quality owes a great deal to James's theory of the unity of consciousness (Shusterman 2010, 2011). Alain Locke, the guiding theorist of the Harlem Renaissance, propounded many key ideas of pragmatist aesthetics in his famous anthology *The New Negro* (1925). Dewey's aesthetics may have been influenced by Locke's aesthetic ideas, not only because of the significant cultural impact made by Locke's anthology, but also from the fact that one of Locke's supporters and collaborators in promoting African art and African American culture was the Philadelphia art collector-critic Albert C. Barnes, who was Dewey's close friend and adviser on artistic matters – the person Dewey acknowledged as the major influence on his aesthetics and to whom he dedicated *Art as Experience*. To complicate this web of influences, Locke (like Dewey) was inspired by William James, who taught Locke at Harvard, while James clearly felt the impact of Emerson, who was indeed his godfather. More important than the details of influence, however, is the significant convergence of aesthetic views among this American quartet of thinkers. In what follows, I illustrate seven major themes of pragmatist aesthetics by citing their views.

Somatic naturalism

The first theme is somatic naturalism. Though art can be correctly described as cultural and even spiritual, pragmatism insists on art's deep roots in the natural world, in the elemental desires, needs and rhythms of the human organism interacting with that

world. Emerson defines art as "nature passed through the alembic of man" (Emerson 1990: 5), just as Dewey held that "underneath the rhythm of every art and every work of art, there lies … the basic pattern of relations of the live creature to his environment" (1969–91a: 155–56). For Emerson and Dewey, art is not pursued purely for its own sake but for the sake of better living ("to serve the whole creature in his unified vitality"; 1969–91a: 122), and the highest art is "the art of life." Alain Locke argued that African and African American art were a much needed resource for Western culture because they expressed a greater vitality that is crucial for artistic excellence and that comes from closer links to the natural world. "Art cannot disdain the gift of … a return to nature," and black artists have "an imagination that has never broken kinship with nature" (Locke 1925: 52). James insists on the essential bodily base of our aesthetic experience while affirming its (indirect) roots in evolutionary adaptations. Not only does our ordinary appreciation of art rely on the feelings it produces on "the bodily sounding board," but even so-called pure aesthetic feelings are those of our bodily senses (James 1983: 1097); and what pleases those senses is connected in complex ways to somatic adaptations that did have survival value for life, even if our actual aesthetic tastes may not. In pragmatist aesthetics, somatic naturalism does not imply a rigid nativism that denies the essentially formative role of culture in shaping aesthetic experience. For pragmatism, nature and culture are continuous and interdependent. As human culture builds on natural energies and resources, so human nature (even in its bodily forms and behavior) is reciprocally shaped by culture, which includes material as well as intellectual aspects (Shusterman 2002).

Functionality

Art's service to life implies a rejection of the traditional aesthetic/practical opposition that defines art by its contemplative noninstrumentality. In the Kantian tradition, functionality is firmly rejected for the appreciation of pure form. Dewey's pragmatist aesthetics contrastingly insists on art's wide-ranging functionality, while affirming the pleasures of its immanent experience, including its pleasures of dynamic form. "The work of esthetic art satisfies many ends … It serves life rather than prescribing a defined and limited mode of living" (1969–91a: 140). Emerson likewise demands that art, in serving life, be both "practical and moral." "This division of beauty from use [is something] the laws of nature do not permit" (Emerson 1990: 193–94). Pragmatism, I repeat, is not at all opposed to artistic form; it simply seeks a greater recognition of art's more-than-formalist values and functions. Appreciatively attentive to art's formal values, Locke also insisted on art's crucial uses for "self-expression," "self-determination," "cultural recognition" and even "material headway" that were especially important for African American society. Thus, "the social promise of our recent art is as great as the artistic" (Locke 1925: ix, xi, 15, 52).

Primacy of art and the aesthetic

Recognition of art's deep functionality and immediate experience of vital delight leads Emerson to praise art over science as representing the peak of human

experience. Science, he argued, suffered somewhat from being dully "unpoetical" and overly divisive in its analysis of things. Dewey, although extremely appreciative of science and endorsing scientific method even in such fields as ethics, also seems in some way to privilege art as ultimately more rewarding, and largely for the same reasons that Emerson does. With its richer blend of sense, affect, meaning and thought, art engages more of the vital human organism in a more meaningful, lively and immediately satisfying way – not merely explaining our experience but constituting a very meaningful and directly enjoyed experience in itself. Dewey thus claims that "art, the mode of activity that is charged with meanings capable of immediately enjoyed possession, is the culmination of nature, and that 'science' is properly a handmaiden that conduces natural events to this happy issue" (1969–91a: 33, 90–91). Although James was a masterful pioneer of psychological science, he nonetheless emphasized science's failure to capture or convey the inspiring qualities that art provides, insisting that "it would be an awful universe if everything were converted into words, words, words" (Perry 1935: 442).

Continuity of the aesthetic, the rational and the practical

If Dewey seems to celebrate art above science, he also insists on their continuity. When properly practiced, both disciplines are creative, symbolic, well-formed expressions that emerge from and restructure life's experience and that demand intelligence, skill and trained knowledge in order to improve experience. As science can be imaginative, so art can provide insights into truth and knowledge. Pragmatist aesthetics sees an essential continuity between art and science and everyday experience in terms of their use of intelligent, purposeful behavior and problem solving. Continuity indeed is an important pragmatist theme that is also evident in Dewey's repeated criticisms of the dualisms that dominate aesthetic theory (such as art/life, art/nature, fine/practical art, high/popular art, spatial/temporal art, aesthetic/practical, artists/ordinary people) but also of other dualisms that plague philosophical thinking beyond the realm of aesthetics: for example, body/mind, material/ideal, thought/feeling, form/substance, means/ends, self/world, subject/object and (as previously mentioned) nature/culture. Emerson famously critiques the institutional compartmentalization of human life that produces fragmentary monsters instead of complete humans, while urging that creative genius "unites the hitherto separated strands into a perfect cord" of wholeness (Emerson 1990: 37–38, 89). James emphasizes the essential continuity of the aesthetic with the practical and the cognitive. Indeed, he argues that aesthetic factors underlie the rational and the cognitive, and even the practical. "The two great aesthetic principles of richness and ease, dominate our intellectual as well as our sensuous life." Cognitively, we want theories that are "rich, simple, and harmonious" to make our understanding both clearer and more fulfilling (James 1983: 943–44). The aesthetic sense of ease also underlies practical considerations not only in theory choice (in terms of the criterion of "least effort") but also in ethical matters such as cleanliness and chastity. In Alain Locke's aesthetics, the notion of continuity is expressed not only in the idea that the arts are closely related and share common elements, but also in what I would call an "aesthetics of the

mix,'' a view that the richness and value of an artwork (or a culture as a whole) tend to be enhanced through the tasteful mixing and interaction of different elements (Locke 1925; Shusterman 2002).

Democratic meliorism

Among pragmatism's most distinctive features is its attitude of meliorism, its desire not simply to understand reality but to improve it. This meliorism is evident also in aesthetics, whose real value is not in mere formal definitions or abstract truths about art and beauty. Its prime goal should instead be to improve art and enhance our ability to appreciate art and other aesthetic phenomena. Locke analyzed and theorized the genre of Negro spirituals not for the mere purposes of history and preservation but to develop their potential for new creativity and transformation as a ''contribution to the music of to-morrow'' (Locke 1925: 210). Moreover, art's goal is not simply to produce improved art techniques, artworks and art appreciation (in the spirit of ''art for art's sake'') but instead to improve life itself. As Emerson claimed, ''There is higher work for Art than the arts … Nothing less than the creation of man and nature is its end'' (Emerson 1990: 192). James argued that though art is based on experience, its ''world of aesthetics … is an ideal world, a Utopia … which we … persist in striving to make actual'' (James 1983: 1235). Dewey likewise claimed that art should be used to improve our lives and world rather than being merely an artificial ''beauty parlor of civilization'' (Dewey 1969–91a: 346).

One vital area for melioristic transformation is the democratization of art, the goal of broadening the notion of art to embrace the experience and expression of more people from more classes, races and walks of life. This theme is central to the pragmatist aesthetics of Emerson, Dewey, James and Locke. Opposing the elitism of high culture that divides society and dries up the fountains of invention, Emerson recommends ''the literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life'' as ''the topics of the time'' that art should treat (Emerson 1990: 50). James likewise urges a ''widening of vision'' to escape aesthetic snobbism and ''wean us away from that spurious literary romanticism on which our wretched culture … is fed'' so that we can regain an appreciation of the simple beauties that can be found ''all about us'' and of the tastes of ''people different from ourselves'' (James 1962: 135). Dewey similarly blasted the stultifying elitism of ''the museum-conception of fine art'' that denies legitimacy to popular art. ''Philosophic theory concerned itself only with those arts that had the stamp and seal of recognition. Popular arts must have flourished but they received no literary attention. They were not worthy of mention in theoretical discussion'' (1969–91a: 191). Unfortunately, Dewey fails to provide popular art with any of the sort of careful, appreciative, legitimizing critical study that by his own account seems necessary. In contrast, Locke provides very detailed practical criticism and legitimizing study of the African American popular arts, not only the musical arts (especially of spirituals and jazz) for which African Americans were most respected, but also the arts of literature, drama, painting and sculpture (Locke 1925, 1936a, 1936b, 1940, 1983; cf. 1989; Shusterman 2002).

Experience and perception

Perhaps the most central theme in Dewey's pragmatist aesthetics is the primacy of experience in art. Dewey famously distinguishes the physical object as mere "art product" from the heightened experiential activity that is the real artwork: "the actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience" – first, the creating artist's experience, then that of the work's audience (1969–91a: 9, 87, 121, 167). For Dewey, the aesthetic experience that defines art is an intensified, well-structured, directly fulfilling experience that involves heightened vitality and feeling and that stands out from the ordinary flow of experience as something special, as *an* experience that is strongly felt, unified, distinctive and memorable. What creates the distinctive unity of such experience is a special, nameless, unifying felt quality that integrates the vastly different elements of experience into a coherent whole and gives it a sense of direction. Dewey derived this notion of a felt but nameless unifying quality from James's theory of the unity of consciousness, whose "stream" is "without breach, crack, or division" because it is unified by a "psychic overtone" or "unnamed" quality that gives a felt "sense of affinity" (James 1983: 247–50). Dewey thus defines aesthetic experience as a smoothly continuous flow like "a river" "without seam" and having "no holes, mechanical junctions, and dead centers" (1969–91a: 43). Like James and Dewey, Emerson emphasized the role of deeply felt experience in art and in life more generally. Since life means movement, a life-serving art cannot be a matter of lifeless artifacts but implies dynamic, changing, lived experience. Hence "true art is never fixed, but also flowing." "The true poem is in the poet's mind," for "the poet has … a new experience to unfold," and by sharing this experience with the audience makes them into new artists as well (Emerson 1990: 119, 189, 192, 200). George Herbert Mead, the famous pragmatist sociologist, likewise emphasized aesthetic experience (Mead 1981).

Classical pragmatism's emphasis on experience and perception rather than on a verbal definition of art and the discursive justification of aesthetic judgments was criticized as outdated by the dominant paradigm of linguistic philosophy that refused to countenance theorizing that involved the nonlinguistic. Today, such consideration of the nonlinguistic and a focus on embodied perceptual experience accords well with promising currents in contemporary philosophy of mind, just as it suggests a return to the founding project of aesthetics as a discipline concerned broadly with sensory perception in general and not just fine art.

Pragmatist aesthetics after Dewey

Dewey's great stature as a philosopher and public intellectual certainly helped to put pragmatist aesthetics on the cultural map, and Deweyan-styled pragmatist aesthetics received some useful elaboration and refinement in the work of Horace Kallen (1942) and Irwin Edman (1939). Dewey's ideas also had impact on the artworld, influencing such important painters as Robert Motherwell, Thomas Hart Benton and Jackson Pollock. Dewey's pragmatist aesthetics was, moreover, an inspiration (insufficiently acknowledged) for the artistic practice and theory of Alan Kaprow,

who helped create the genre of performance art known as the "Happening" (Kaprow 1993). But after the middle of the twentieth century, Dewey's aesthetics began to decline in influence, even in the academic world of philosophy. Analytic philosophers of art generally dismissed his aesthetics as "a hodgepodge of conflicting methods and undisciplined speculations," and since analytic philosophy dominated mainstream Anglo-American philosophical aesthetics, the profile of pragmatist aesthetics significantly fell for a few decades (Isenberg 1987: 128; Shusterman 1992). Although the important analytic aesthetician Monroe Beardsley was clearly influenced by Dewey's theory of aesthetic experience and indeed made that concept the key to Beardsley's definitions of art and aesthetic value (1958), the spirit of Beardsley's definitions and definitional aims was rather remote from Dewey's (see Shusterman 2000). Outside the analytic establishment, however, Dewey's aesthetics continued to receive careful interpretive attention and creative commentary by philosophers such as John McDermott (1986) and Thomas Alexander (1987), and later by Casey Haskins (1992), Crispin Sartwell (1995), Robert Innis (2002) and Scott Stroud (2011).

There are, however, some philosophers who have had strong links to analytic philosophy, but who have built on Deweyan and other pragmatist insights to enrich the tradition of pragmatist aesthetics by offering new pragmatist approaches to traditional aesthetic topics (such as the interpretation and definition of art and of the very notion of aesthetics) and to more distinctively contemporary issues ranging from mass-media arts and multiculturalism to postmodernism and the stylizations of the art of living.

Nelson Goodman, for example, develops Dewey's theme of the continuity of art and science. Rejecting the idea of "autonomous aesthetic objects," valued merely for the pleasure of their form, Goodman urges the fundamental unity of art and science through their "common cognitive function." Hence aesthetics should be placed with philosophy of science and "should be conceived as an integral part of metaphysics and epistemology"; and aesthetic value is subsumed under "cognitive excellence." Despite his attempt to supply extremely strict definitions of works of art in terms of the conditions of identity and authenticity of the material objects that exemplify them, Goodman insists with Dewey (and Beardsley) that what matters aesthetically is not precisely what the material art object is but how it functions in dynamic experience. He therefore advocates that we replace the question "What is art?" with the question "When is art?" (Goodman 1969: 259; 1978: 70, 102; 1984: 6, 148). Moreover, Goodman offers a critique of contemporary museum practices and ideology that greatly resembles the spirit of Dewey's critique of the museum conception of fine art, though Goodman of course has a very different style of argumentation (Goodman 1984). Both thinkers warn against the fetishization and compartmentalization of art objects, arguing instead that our purpose should be the maximization of the active use of such objects in the production of aesthetic experience.

Other philosophers trained in the analytic tradition, such as Joseph Margolis, Richard Rorty and Richard Shusterman, have used pragmatist ideas to show how the interpretation of artworks can be meaningful and valid without the need to posit fixed entities as the unchanging objects of these valid interpretations. Their

arguments explain how traditionally entrenched but dialogically open practices can be enough to secure identity of reference for discussion of the work (and thus ensure that we can meaningfully talk about the same work) without positing that there is therefore a fixed, substantive nature of the artwork that permanently defines its identity and grounds all valid interpretation. This basic strategy of distinguishing between substantive and referential identity is formulated in different ways by these contemporary pragmatists (Margolis 1999a; Rorty 1991; Shusterman 1992). All three of these theorists stress the historicity and culturally embedded nature of artworks, but only Margolis tries to erect this idea into a ramified metaphysics of cultural objects (Margolis 1999a, 1999b; Rorty 1984). Opposing the idea (shared by Rorty, Margolis and the literary pragmatist Stanley Fish) that all our aesthetic experience is interpretation, Shusterman (1992, 1997, 2000, 2008) deploys Dewey (but also Wittgenstein) in arguing for some level of embodied experience and understanding that exists "beneath interpretation" and even beyond language.

As Nelson Goodman revived Dewey's continuum of art and science, so Richard Rorty extends Dewey's pragmatist blending of aesthetics and ethics by advocating "the aesthetic life" as an ethics of "self-enrichment," "self-enlargement" and "self-creation" (Rorty 1989). Rorty's vision of the aesthetic life has been criticized for its reductive isolation in the private sphere, its narrowing focus on language and high cultural texts and its consequent failure to engage with popular art forms and robustly embodied experience. In contrast, affirming a role for aesthetics in our pursuit of democracy as a way of life, Shusterman urges greater appreciation of the aesthetic experience of popular arts by providing detailed aesthetic analyses of contemporary popular art genres (such as rap and country music) and by advocating somatic disciplines that can augment our aesthetic experience and creative power in the art of living by enhancing our body consciousness, perception and performance. This leads to the project of somaesthetics, a field of theory and practice that explicitly emerged out of pragmatist aesthetics (Shusterman 2000, 2008, 2012). Rorty counters not only by questioning the idea of a somatic aesthetics, but by expressing his "scepticism about 'aesthetics' as a field of inquiry," disparaging it as "another of Kant's bad ideas" (Rorty 2001: 156).

Although Stanley Cavell is reluctant to carry the label "pragmatist," his excellent, detailed work on popular cinema and television (Cavell 1979, 1981, 1984) certainly helps extend the respect for popular art that Dewey advocated. Moreover, although Cavell's meliorist theory of moral perfectionism does not particularly emphasize the aesthetic dimension (Cavell 1990), it importantly contributes to the pragmatic idea of philosophy as an art of living. With respect to perfectionism, democracy and other themes, Cavell typically takes Emerson rather than Dewey or James as his mentor, but that is no reason to exclude Cavell from the pragmatist tradition. For, as we have already seen, an excellent case can be made that Emerson himself anticipated almost all the major themes that we identify as pragmatist in Dewey's aesthetics. The promising future of pragmatist aesthetics will no doubt contribute also to the reinterpretation of its tradition and the thinkers and themes it includes.

See also The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Value of art (Chapter 28).

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11
EXPRESSIVISM
Croce and Collingwood

Gordon Graham

It is widely believed that the essence of art is the expression of feeling or emotion, a view often simply assumed to be true by students, critics and even very great artists. Thus Tolstoy in *What Is Art?* asserts that "art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings and also experience them" (Tolstoy 1930: 123). I shall call this view "expressivism."

If we think of expressivism as resting on an inductive generalization about works of art, it confronts this difficulty: many artworks are not obviously of this kind. The music of Grieg and Tchaikovsky, the paintings of van Gogh and Manet, and the poetry of Byron and Wordsworth are examples that seem to count in its favor, but mainly because their creation was itself inspired by expressivism. By contrast, the music of Bach and Handel, the paintings of Picasso and Klee, or the poetry of Milton and Pope are much less easily characterized as "expressions of emotion." These alternative examples do not disprove expressivism as a philosophical theory of art, however. They simply show that it is not so obviously true as is often supposed, that it needs philosophical support, and warrants critical examination.

The two most celebrated exponents of philosophical expressivism are the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce (1866–1952), and the British philosopher who took inspiration from him, R. G. Collingwood (1889–1943) This chapter will outline and examine Croce's theory of art, Collingwood's amendment of it, and look at some recent criticism and defenses.

Croce: art as "intuition"

The clearest statement of Croce's view is to be found in an essay entitled "What Is Art?" (in Croce 1965). The title is a self-conscious reference to Tolstoy's book, since Croce intended to give a better and more philosophical defense of the same idea. According to Croce, and in words that have become the defining slogan for his theory of art, art is essentially "intuition" and

> what lends coherence and unity to intuition is intense feeling. Intuition is truly such because it expresses an intense feeling and can arise only when the latter is its source and base. Not idea but intense feeling is what confers upon art the ethereal lightness of the symbol.
>
> (Croce 1965: 25)

When Croce says "art is intuition" what does he mean and why does he say it? The term "intuition" is one which did not catch on widely in aesthetics, and its everyday meaning is unhelpful. It is a technical term, largely of Croce's invention, whose purpose is simply to identify what is special and distinctive about art. He amplifies the idea by drawing a number of distinctions.

The first is between art and physical fact. A work of art cannot be identified with its physical embodiment. There is more to a painting than pigments on canvas, and it is in this "more" that the real painting is to be found. Second, Croce denies that art has anything "utilitarian" about it. Again this captures a common thought. A painting might prove useful – as a decoration or an investment for example – but its usefulness would be quite tangential to its aesthetic value. Someone who valued it solely for its utility would have no interest in it "as art."

Most people accept this distinction, though Croce adds that if art gives us pleasure, this too is an inessential utilitarian end. On this point, more people would be inclined to disagree, because they believe art to be essentially connected with pleasure. Croce rightly points out, though, that many different kinds of thing give us pleasure. To make art special, we would need a distinctive concept of *aesthetic* pleasure, and thus still require an explanation of what marks it off as "aesthetic."

Third, art is not "a moral act." "Art," says Croce, "does not originate from an act of will." While it makes sense to say that an artistic image or portrayal can be of something morally praiseworthy or blameworthy, it makes no sense to say that the image is itself either of these things. To try to do so would be "just as valid as to judge a square moral or a triangle immoral" (Croce 1965: 13).

Finally, and most importantly, Croce denies that art "has the character of conceptual knowledge." It is here that the meaning of the term "intuition" becomes somewhat clearer. Conceptual knowledge (and under this label we may include philosophy, history and science) is founded upon a distinction between reality and unreality, so that it must compare its hypotheses with "the world out there." "In contrast, intuition refers precisely to the lack of distinction between reality and unreality – to the image itself – with its purely ideal status as mere image" (Croce 1965: 14). The idea is that, unlike a scientific theory which requires independent confirming evidence, a work of art is sufficient unto itself; to understand its meaning and value we need only look at the work, and can ignore the world beyond it. Whether it represents that world in a lifelike way (as do Courbet and the realists) or grossly distorts it (like Dali and the surrealists) is irrelevant to its aesthetic worth. This is apprehended without mediation – hence the language of "intuition." Art is "nonlogical."

So much for the *via negativa*. Art is not physical, utilitarian, moral or productive of knowledge. What then does this leave? If artistic images are not constrained by external reality, practical value or a moral purpose, what makes them more than idle

fancies? Or as Croce puts it, "what function belongs properly to the pure image in the life of the spirit?" (Croce 1965: 21). The answer stated briefly is that properly artistic images are "symbols."

> Art is symbol, all symbol, that is all significant. But symbol of what? Signifying what? Intuition is truly artistic, is truly intuition and not a chaotic accumulation of images, only when it has a vital principle which animates it and makes for its complete unit.
>
> (Croce 1965: 23)

So we arrive at the doctrine quoted at the start: "intense feeling is what confers upon art the ethereal lightness of the symbol" (ibid.: 25). In short, the images of art proper are symbolic expressions of feeling.

Objections to expressivism

Expressivist accounts of the relation between artist, work and audience generate serious difficulties fairly quickly. Many of these were lucidly cataloged by John Hospers in a famous address he gave to the Aristotelian Society entitled "The Concept of Artistic Expression" (Hospers 1955). They can be recounted as follows.

First, by defining an artwork in terms of its origins, expressivism seems to announce, in advance of considering the historical facts, that it must have been intense feeling which caused Shakespeare, Handel, Michelangelo, Wren and countless others to create in the way that they did. If, on the other hand, in order to avoid this sort of apriorism, expressivism is understood to be offering us an empirical generalization, it seems to be false. Many celebrated artists have expressly denied that emotion lay at the heart of their endeavors.

Second, attributing to each work of art "an intense feeling" which unifies it overlooks the difference between simple and complex works. While it is not implausible to say that a simple love song expresses love, in a complex work with, say, a great array of characters in a variety of relationships, such a wide range of emotions and attitudes is represented that it is impossible to say that any single one is that which the work expresses. What emotion lies at the heart of, unifies or is expressed by *War and Peace*, for instance? There is much emotion in it certainly, but not, it seems to me, any one emotion which may be said to be expressed by it.

Third, a similar doubt arises about the emotional content of certain art forms. Possible examples of emotional expression are easy to find in poetry, opera and the theater. But is it plausible to suggest that modernist works of architecture express emotion? Or abstract paintings? Or musical canons and fugues?

A fourth difficulty is this. The feeling a work expresses must be embodied in that work. Even if it arose out of an emotional experience, and generated real emotion on the part of the audience, it could still be false that that emotion was the content of the work. For example: imagine that a disillusioned painter contemptuously exhibits a rehash of previous work, and duly elicits the contempt of those who visit the exhibition. This would not make his paintings expressive of contempt. So the emotion must

be in the work. But how exactly? To say that a song or a painting not merely causes or was caused by sadness, but is *itself* feeling sad, seems quite unintelligible.

A fifth problem relates to the role expressivism assigns to the audience. Is it true that aesthetic appreciation requires us to feel the emotion that a work of art may be thought to express? It may be true that sad and solemn music tends to induce sadness, and that laughter and gaiety portrayed on stage or in a story engender lightheartedness in the audience. It is certainly often the case that horror and fear are induced in an audience by plays and films. But while some generalizations of this sort may be valid, it is plain that this is not a point that extends to all emotions. Jealousy and romantic love are familiar emotions expressed in literature, but I can read a poem expressing all-consuming jealousy in the first person (Browning's "My Last Duchess," for instance) without becoming to the faintest degree jealous myself, just as I can read a love poem without falling in love myself.

A sixth objection to expressivism lies in its implausibility as an explanation of the value of art. To regard art in the way that it does seems actually to remove one of its most valuable aspects: imaginative power. If the emotion expressed in a work should, ideally, be the artist's own, this downgrades just what makes so many works of art remarkable: that they are major feats of imagination. In short, expressivism not only ignores the value of imagination; it actually eliminates it.

A similar question arises about the value of arousing emotion in an audience. Why should greater success in the arousal of emotion count as the mark of higher art? Arguably, the most obvious works which aim to do this, and are often highly successful in this respect, are horror films and pornographic movies. The point of these is to induce fear and lust, and that is what they usually do. Moreover, in the main they do it with greater success than more celebrated works of art. But no one could put horror films or pornography on a higher level than Shakespearean tragedy.

Is Croce's version of expressivism susceptible to these objections? Gary Kemp has argued that Croce's concept of "feeling" is quite different to everyday emotions like fear and anger. Accordingly, we should not interpret him as generalizing about causal relations between art and emotion, but constructing a philosophical theory about the distinctive nature of art. The key contention is that in art the expression of a feeling is identical with having it. If this is correct, then the empirical objections about the causal relations between art and feeling fall. It remains to ask just what role "feeling" does play.

Collingwood: art as expression

Croce's concept of feeling is adopted and extended in R. G. Collingwood's *Principles of Art* (1938). Collingwood holds that commonplace versions of expressivism are mistaken in their supposition that the emotion an artwork expresses exists in advance of its creation. Rather, in the process of creating the work, the artist refines and clarifies an original "psychic disturbance" – that is, a sense datum of some kind that has expressive properties – until it can be recognized as the emotion it is. The activity of feeling and the activity of creating, though "not identical … are connected in such a way that … each is conditional upon the other" (Collingwood 1938: 304).

"Every imaginative experience is a sensuous experience raised to the imaginative level by an act of consciousness" (ibid.: 306).

As this suggests, imagination plays a central role in Collingwood's aesthetic (as it does in Croce's). In fact, art proper as he describes it has two equally crucial elements, expression and imagination. A work of art expresses emotion, certainly, but its creation and appreciation are both acts of imagination, and the work properly so called exists in the imagination. In line with Croce's distinction between art and "physical fact," Collingwood holds that works of art must be recreated in the minds of their audience; a painted boat is seen in the picture, not found in the pigment and canvas. Just as it is by imaginative construction that the artist transforms inchoate emotion into an articulate expression, so it is only by imaginative reconstruction that the audience can apprehend it. The process of artistic creation is thus not a matter of making external what already exists internally. It is instead a process of imaginative discovery and, since the psychic disturbance is the artist's, a process of self-discovery. Herein, in fact, lies its peculiar value: self-knowledge.

> Art is not a luxury, and bad art is not a thing we can afford to tolerate. To know ourselves is the foundation of all life that develops beyond the mere psychical level of experience … Every utterance and every gesture that each one of us makes is a work of art. It is important to each one of us that in making them, however much he deceives others, he should not deceive himself. If he deceives himself in this matter, he has sown in himself a seed which, unless he roots it up again, may grow into any kind of wickedness, any kind of mental disease, any kind of stupidity, and folly and insanity. Bad art, the corrupt consciousness, is the true *radix malorum*.
>
> (Collingwood 1938: 284–85)

If it is true that the end of art is self-knowledge, knowledge of our own emotional states, this appears to have the unwelcome consequence that artistic creation could only be of real interest to its creator; art becomes a form of purely subjective introspection. The odd implication of this is that we no longer seem to have any reason to devote special attention to a Leonardo or a Shakespeare.

This is a natural inference to draw, but nonetheless mistaken. Collingwood is aware that his account of art and the artist may easily be construed in this way, and as a result he devotes a whole chapter to the relation between artist and community. In it he argues that it is not "what I feel" that the artist identifies and articulates, but "what we feel."

> The artist's business is to express emotions; and the only emotions he can express are those which he feels, namely his own … If he attaches any importance to the judgement of his audience, it can only be because he thinks that the emotions he has tried to express are … shared by his audience … In other words he undertakes his artistic labour not as a personal effort on his own private behalf, but as a public labour on behalf of the community to which he belongs.
>
> (Collingwood 1938: 314–15)

Artists do not live in their own self-contained, solipsistic world; they live and work in human societies. So it is not merely artists, but whole communities, that (can) come to self-knowledge as a result of their work. This is why "art is the community's medicine for the worst disease of mind, the corruption of consciousness" (ibid.: 336). Moreover, since it is only in active reconstruction of a work that it can be said to exist for the audience at all, this eliminates the false conception of the passive spectator whose emotions are played upon: "art is not contemplation, it is action" (ibid.: 332), and the function of the audience is "not a merely receptive one, but collaborative" (ibid.: 324).

The *Principles of Art* clearly advances beyond Tolstoy's version of expressivism. Though some of the same difficulties arise, the chief merit of this version is that it centers on the properties of the artwork, and not on the psychological condition of the artist and audience. The Tolstoyan version invites us to scrutinize the artist's personal history. Collingwood, on the other hand, is scathing about art criticism that has been reduced to grubbing around for historical tidbits about painters and poets.

Still, this problem remains. If the feeling expressed in a work of art is inseparable from that work, what reason is there to call the work an expression of the *artist's* emotion? Why infer back from the work to the artist's emotions at all? And if, with both Croce and Collingwood, we acknowledge that what we find in a work of art is "wholly and entirely imaginative" (Collingwood 1938: 306), why not conclude that the emotion presented to us is presented, so to speak, indifferently as to ownership? It is not anyone's and hence not the artist's.

Moreover, to argue as Collingwood does, that a specific emotion cannot be attributed to the artist independently of the work, and that imaginative power is an indispensable part of the artist's endeavor, is in effect to agree that the artist's peculiar gift is not a special capacity to feel, but a special capacity to imagine. This is tantamount to abandoning an important element of expressivism, one to which Collingwood explicitly subscribes, namely that "the artist's business is to express emotions; and the only emotions he can express are those which he feels … his own."

In a similar fashion the audience's emotional experience also drops out of the picture once we examine Collingwood's expressivism closely. Everyday expressivism holds that emotion is transmitted from artist to audience by being aroused in the audience. Collingwood argues that using art to arouse emotion is a confusion of art proper with craft. Nevertheless, given that the artist's expression of emotion is itself an experience of emotion, and given further that audience participation is a collaborative realization of that experience on the part of both artist and audience, it seems to follow that the artist's emotion is aroused in the audience. In order to avoid this apparently contradictory conclusion, Collingwood must argue that the audience's collaborative activity, like the artist's own, is "wholly and entirely imaginative." This may be true, but if it is, what anyone actually feels on reading a poem or watching a play is as irrelevant as is the psychological history of the author. It is as much a mistake to try to determine the merits of a work of art by audience "reaction" as it is to judge it on the author's "sincerity."

Here a distinction between "being an expression of" and "being expressive of" is crucial. Some writers sympathetic to expressivism have argued that the errors in the commonplace theory arise from a confusion between the two. "Being an expression

of emotion" implies that there is someone whose expression it is. "Being expressive of" does not imply any possessor, either artist or audience. To replace the first with the second, therefore, seems a good way to maintain the expressivist's main claim, while avoiding any false psychologism about artists and audiences.

That this distinction is important seems incontestable. Whether it can be used to save expressivism is a different matter. Why is a work's being *expressive of* emotion something to be valued? To my mind this is a critical question for expressivism. Collingwood's explanation is that in acting imaginatively upon emotion we bring it to consciousness, discover thereby what our consciousness contains, and come to self-knowledge. Now if what the artist does is not to express emotion, but to formulate expressive utterances or representations of it, then whatever value this has, it cannot consist in self-knowledge. If they are not our emotions we come to no further knowledge of ourselves by apprehending them.

To avoid this conclusion we might try to divorce audience apprehension from emotion completely, even where the work in question can indeed be said to be expressive of an emotion. In places, Collingwood himself speaks in this way. He sometimes describes the activity of both artist and audience in the language of cognition rather than feeling. So, for instance, he imagines a (right-minded) painter declaring "one paints a thing in order to see it." "Only a person who paints well," he goes on to tell us, "can see well; and conversely … only a person who sees well can paint well." Seeing here "refers not to sensation but to awareness. It means noticing what you see. And further: this act of awareness includes the noticing of much that is not visual" (Collingwood 1938: 303–4). On the face of it, this sort of analysis implies that the value of art lies not in its helping us to come to a proper apprehension of personal (or even communal) feeling, but a greater awareness of the world around us. And this remains the obvious interpretation even where, as in expressive representations, "the world around us" is the world of emotional experience.

The expressivist theory of art, at least in its commonplace version, holds that where a specific emotion can be assigned to a work of art, the work is an expression of that emotion and appreciation of the work consists in feeling that emotion oneself. If the work is expressive of the emotion, rather than being an actual expression of it, appreciating the work is a matter of coming to a heightened awareness of that emotion. Evidently, though, we can be aware of emotions without feeling them ourselves. For example: I might be quite unaware of your jealousy until one day you hit upon an especially expressive word or gesture which reveals it. Now I become aware of your emotional intensity, but I don't experience any feelings of jealousy myself. Any emotion I do feel – fear or anxiety, for instance – has only a contingent connection with yours and is not a necessary condition of my being made aware of it. Nor is it sufficient. Your words and gestures could make me fearful or anxious, even though I remain unaware that they are driven by jealousy. What this shows is that the initially innocent substitution of "being expressive of" for "being an expression of" signals the abandonment of expressivism. If the function of art is to heighten awareness, the special connection between art and emotion which all forms of expressivism try to articulate and maintain is broken, because art can heighten our awareness of much in human experience besides emotion.

There is reason to think that Collingwood would not in the end deny this. His most extended discussion of a work of art is of Eliot's "The Waste Land," and what he says about it is instructive, for he sees Eliot as presenting us with a prophetic vision.

> This poem is not in the least amusing. Nor is it in the least magical. The reader who expects it to be satire, or an entertaining description of vices, is as disappointed with it as the reader who expects it to be propaganda, or an exhortation to get up and do something. To the annoyance of both parties, it contains no indictments and no proposals. To the amateurs of literature, brought up on the idea of poetry as a genteel amusement, the thing is an affront. To the little neo-Kiplings who think of poetry as an incitement to political virtue, it is even worse; for it describes an evil where no one and nothing is to blame, an evil not curable by shooting capitalists or destroying a social system, a disease which has so eaten into civilization that political remedies are about as useful as poulticing a cancer.
>
> (Collingwood 1938: 335)

In "The Waste Land" Eliot shows "what poetry can be," for "the artist must prophesy not in the sense that he foretells things to come, but in the sense that he tells his audience, at risk of their displeasure, the secrets of their own hearts" (ibid.: 336).

What is important here is not the justice of Collingwood's estimate of Eliot's achievement, but the language he uses to make it. Eliot is said to "describe," not feel, the present evil, and to "tell," not express for, the audience the secrets of their hearts. This is the language of cognition, not emotion. But here Collingwood, following Croce, would warn us against confusing consciousness and intellect. It is the intellect, on Collingwood's view, which orders and organizes the data of consciousness, and establishes relations between them. It is art, however, that brings those data to consciousness in the first place. It does so by realizing the sensuous impact of experience in a form in which consciousness can grasp it. There are thus two kinds of truth, the truth of intellect and the truth of consciousness. Science, broadly understood, is concerned with the former and art with the latter. Thus art may indeed be said to describe, to tell, to prophesy, but since its concern is with the truth of consciousness, none of this removes it from the world of emotional experience. Or so at any rate Collingwood and Croce contend.

If one is to speak of truth in art, some such distinction as Collingwood and Croce draw is needed, for whatever we may be said to learn from artists it is not what we learn from the laboratory. At the same time, it seems that only a lingering loyalty to expressivism could motivate Collingwood to go on speaking of emotion in the way he does. For at the end of his analysis "emotion" means nothing more than sensuous experience brought to consciousness. It is true that when artists give expression to this experience, they do not construct a generalized abstract account of the experience, as a psychologist might do. They make their experience the subject of an imaginative presentation which can itself be experienced by an audience. But this, it seems, gives no special place to emotional experience on either side – the artist's experience, or the audience's response. Art as such does not stimulate emotion; it directs consciousness.

If Gary Kemp is right, however, this is too quick a conclusion to draw. It is true that both Croce and Collingwood are using the terms "feeling" and "emotion" in ways that depart significantly from their normal use. Nevertheless, there may yet be a sense in which expressivism captures an important aspect of the creation and appreciation of works of art. To understand what this is, we need to interpret the "Expression Thesis" (Kemp's term), not so much as a descriptive claim about what unites all the things we call art, but as a normative thesis about what makes something "art proper," to use Collingwood's language. That is to say, the expression thesis aims to explain what makes a work of art valuable or important.

> Artistic creation and understanding must be spontaneous, and works of art must be conceptually recalcitrant, ineffable: Understanding them, knowing their content, is necessarily experiential in a way that conceptual understanding is not … emphasis [must be laid] on the subjectivity of aesthetic experience, on what it is like to experience the work … The aesthetic significance of the experience of the work of art [thus] depends upon its emotional or feeling-content (as presented by its sensuous content).
>
> (Kemp 2003: 189)

The idea behind this claim is that the appreciation of a work of art as both a singular object and an integrated experience requires that its sensuous properties – colors, shapes, sounds, objects, etc. – are animated and bound together by expressive properties. It is this that makes the experience of it aesthetic.

> Think, for example, of the late van Gogh's olive trees and cypresses, trembling in the midday sun, or bent by the afternoon winds of late summer: most of those who sympathize with these pictures, I suppose, will agree that van Gogh's singular brushwork and coloring intimate what it is like for a person of exquisite, or even pathological sensibility to gaze upon such things … The sense of the reality of the experience – that is, its seeming fidelity to what it is like – is far more significant than its extreme departures from visual literalness.
>
> (Kemp 2003: 180)

This is a persuasive example of how Croce and Collingwood's expressivism can be called upon to make "feeling" central to art in a way that also invokes "truthfulness." It is less clear, to me, that it articulates a genuine version of what is generally meant by the claim that art essentially expresses emotion. More importantly perhaps, it is very hard to produce equally persuasive examples from, say, architecture or the performing arts. One reason for this, it can be argued, is that these are arts of use and engagement rather than production and contemplation. If Kemp's version of the "Croce-Collingwood Theory" is correct, it shows it to be a theory that has application to painting, poetry and the plastic arts. Both Croce and Collingwood, however, believed that they had identified something essential to art in general.

See also Definitions of art (Chapter 21), Ontology of art (Chapter 23), Value of art (Chapter 28), Art, expression and emotion (Chapter 39), Creativity (Chapter 42).

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12
HEIDEGGER

Thomas E. Wartenberg

Martin Heidegger is generally regarded as the most significant continental philosopher of the twentieth century and, along with Ludwig Wittgenstein, one of the two greatest philosophers of that century. Deeply influenced by Edmund Husserl, the founder of the phenomenological school of philosophy, Heidegger instituted a radical rethinking of the most basic concepts by means of which Western philosophers had attempted to cognize the structure of all that exists. Despite the difficulty of his writing and the obscurity of some of his claims, Heidegger's philosophy marks an important turning point in Western thought.

Heidegger came to believe that art was one of the distinctive ways in which truths about reality could be apprehended by human beings. In this respect, he allies himself with his great German predecessors, G. W. F. Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche, all of whom held that art had significant cognitive import. Also like his forebears, Heidegger thought that art was fundamentally historical, that the art of an era was marked by that era's most basic assumptions about human existence. Indeed, his innovation was to develop an account of art that explains its deep metaphysical import.

Anyone trying to understand Heidegger's claims about art will be struck by the density of his prose. The difficulty of Heidegger's writing on art stems from at least two sources. First, Heidegger was a systematic philosopher of the first rank, so that his views on art depend on his understanding of general issues in metaphysics. In addition, since he believed that our ordinary language unconsciously incorporates misleading philosophic models, he believed it was necessary to develop a terminology that would forestall such misconceptions. Still, it is possible to frame most of Heidegger's basic claims accessibly while still demonstrating their insightfulness and significance for understanding of the nature of art.

Life

Martin Heidegger was born on 26 September 1889 in Messkirch in southwest Germany to a Catholic family. As a youth, he intended to enter the priesthood, but became disillusioned and took up the study of philosophy instead. In 1927, he published his major work, *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962), in order to qualify for a professorship

at the University of Marburg. Upon the retirement of his mentor, Edmund Husserl, Heidegger assumed Husserl's chair at the University of Freiburg, where he continued to lecture on a wide range of philosophic questions, mostly centrally those in metaphysics. Heidegger assumed the rectorship of the University of Heidelberg in 1933 as its first Nazi rector. Although he resigned a year later, there is ongoing controversy about the extent of Heidegger's commitment to the Nazis' abhorrent racist policies and whether he actually acted in ways that furthered them. After the war, he was banned from teaching but the ban was rescinded in 1949. Until his death, Heidegger continued to lecture on the basic questions of philosophy.

Heidegger's philosophy underwent a fundamental transformation after the publication of *Being and Time*. He became critical of his own earlier work for still adhering to problematic aspects of the Western tradition of thinking. His later works – to which the essays on art and poetry belong – are more obscure and less systematic than *Being and Time*. They nonetheless articulate a sweeping critique of modern thought and society for both its growing dependence on technology and its "forgetfulness of being," the latter being the theme that animated nearly all of his thinking. In addition, these writings emphasize the importance in human life of art in general and poetry more specifically.

When Heidegger died on 26 May 1976, he was generally acknowledged as one of that century's most significant thinkers. The intervening decades have only seen an increase in his influence – although controversy about his involvement with the Nazis has continued to dog his reputation. Even his critics admit to the depth of his insights about the basic question of philosophy.

"The Origin of the Work of Art"

Heidegger's most systematic presentation of his philosophy of art occurs in an essay entitled, "The Origin of the Work of Art." The two most basic claims he puts forward in this essay are easy to state but difficult to understand. In response to the question implicitly posed by the essay's title – "What is the origin of the work of art?" – he answers quite paradoxically, "Art." When he goes on to define art as the "setting-into-work of truth," matters appear to be even more murky. What could this apparently tautological claim and this very abstruse definition possibly show us about the nature of art?

The first assertion is actually the easier of the two to grasp. If we peruse different answers that have been put forward by philosophers in the Western tradition to the question "What is art?" we will notice that they emphasize different aspects of what I will refer to as the complex social practice that is art. Some purported definitions of art – such as that put forward by Arthur Danto (1964) – focus, quite naturally, on the objects created as the essential feature of art, asking what distinguishes these objects from all those things to which we deny the name of art. Others – here I'm thinking of Collingwood (1938) – see the artist as the crucial element, even going so far as to deny that the object produced is essential to "art proper." Still others emphasize the audience for the work, taking our responses to such works as the definitive feature of the practice. This view has become quite dominant in postmodern

circles, where the creativity of the interpreter and theorist has been elevated above that of the creator of the works in question, for example by Roland Barthes (1977).

In opposition to such reductive accounts of art, Heidegger puts forward a *holistic* account that treats every aspect of art – artist (or *creator* in his terminology), work and audience (*preserver*) – as essential to it. A philosophic account of a given domain is holistic when it claims that all the different facets of that area are equally basic to it. A holistic account of the human being, for example, would deny that either the body or the mind was more basic, that the human being had to be understood in terms of both of these crucial features. Heidegger's account of art is holistic in just this sense, for when he claims that art is the origin of the work of art, he puts the art object into the broader context of artistic practice – the primary reference of the term "art" – and claims that only by understanding the entire practice can we understand the work of art itself.

Of course, the question remains as to what precisely a holistic understanding of art is. Although Heidegger emphasizes the role of the creators and preservers of the work, he is not explicit about what else is constitutive of art itself. Recent analytic philosophical discussion of the artworld – see Dickie (1974) for an extended analysis of this notion – as central to a work's being art can help clarify and extend this element of Heidegger's discussion.

Concealed in the title to Heidegger's essay, as well as in the question it raises about the work of art's origin, is a philosophic pun, for the phrase "work of art" is subtly ambiguous. The obvious meaning is that of art object, that which the artist produces, the work. But *work* can also mean *effect* and Heidegger relies on this meaning as well, for he seeks to explain the specific "effect" of art, what it *does* that distinguishes it from other social practices. The issue here has to do with our response to works of art, how they affect *us*, how they, as we would say, *work*.

Awareness of this subtle wordplay helps set the context for interpreting Heidegger's second basic claim about art: that art is the setting-into-work of truth. But to understand this claim, we will have to investigate what Heidegger means by truth.

The idea of truth is a crucial one for Heidegger's philosophy in general. Following his overall strategy, Heidegger argues that our usual philosophic understanding of truth as correspondence – say of an idea or assertion and the object to which it refers – is derivative, for there is a more basic conception of truth that underlies it and makes it possible. The problem is that this more basic meaning of truth has been obscured by the predominance of the former. For Heidegger, it is a philosophic task of the utmost importance to retrieve this basic meaning of truth. Relying for support on the supposed etymology of the Greek word for truth, *aletheia*, Heidegger argues that the fundamental sense of truth is *unconcealedness* or, more idiomatically, disclosure. To see a being in its truth is not to see its correspondence to an idea of it that we have, say, in our minds, but to see it for the very thing that it is, to have its being disclosed.

So what is it that truth reveals or unconceals, according to Heidegger? The answer – being – is once again obscure but it is very basic for his thought. Heidegger believes that Western philosophy has failed to pay sufficient attention to *being*, passing over it in favor of *beings*. Heidegger dubs the difference between being and beings "the ontological difference."

It is important to understand what Heidegger is referring to by the *being–beings* distinction. A being is, for Heidegger, anything that exists, what we can call an "entity." Anything, from the smallest pebble to the grandest star, is a being, an entity, some*thing* that exists. Heidegger uses the term "beings" explicitly to avoid others – like "thing" – that carry along with them implicit but unthematized conceptions of what a being (an entity) is like, its basic structure, in other words, its *being*. If one were, for example, to take "thing" as the most basic means of conceptualizing beings, an implicit understanding of being would already be involved, for things – or, at any rate, *mere* things – are different from, say, works of art or persons, so one would have already, albeit unconsciously, have invoked a specific conception of the being of such things.

A careful reader will have noticed that I already used the term "being" in my explanation of what "beings" means. For Heidegger, "being" refers to the basic structure of what there is in the world. When we say that there are different types of things in the world, we are saying, for Heidegger, that being differentiates itself into different types of beings. It is of the utmost importance, he thinks, not to skip over the nature of being itself in order to focus exclusively on beings.

This is because, for the later Heidegger, being always reveals itself to humans in a specific sociohistorical context. As we shall see, this is an important claim that affects Heidegger's understanding of art and its "work." For the moment, though, all that need concern us is the idea that the nature of existence always appears to us in a specific guise, one in which the being of beings is already determined. Truth, then, allows being and, along with it, beings to reveal themselves to us as they really are. Since art is one of the ways in which this is disclosed to us, let's turn now to Heidegger's account of how a specific work – Vincent van Gogh's painting entitled *A Pair of Shoes* (1886) – does this and what it discloses.

There is some controversy about which of van Gogh's paintings of shoes Heidegger is thinking of. Many websites include images of these paintings (for example, vangoghgallery.com). It is generally agreed that it is the 1886 painting (whose image can be found at <http://www.vangoghgallery.com/catalog/Painting/378/Pair-of-Shoes,-A.html>). Here is a brief and selective version of Heidegger's interpretation:

> From out of the dark opening of the well-worn insides of the shoes the toil of the worker's tread stares forth … The shoes vibrate with the silent call of the earth, its silent gift of the ripening grain, its unexplained self-refusal in the wintry field … This equipment [the shoes] belongs *to the earth* and finds protection in the *world* of the peasant woman … In virtue of this *reliability* the peasant woman is admitted into the silent call of the earth; in virtue of the reliability of the equipment she is certain of her world.
>
> (Heidegger 2002: 14)

There has been a very lively debate about Heidegger's interpretation. The noted art historian Meyer Schapiro (1978) questioned whether the shoes were really those of a peasant woman rather than van Gogh's own shoes. More recently, Jacques Derrida (1987) posed the question of whether these two shoes even constitute a *pair* at all. Despite these objections, we need to focus on what the picture meant to Heidegger.

Although van Gogh's painting only shows us two shoes placed on a very abstract background, Heidegger sees the painting as revealing a great deal more to us. First, when we look at the shoes, we don't simply identify them as shoes, we realize that they are work shoes of some sort. Heidegger infers that they belong to a peasant woman. Once we make this identification, we are led, Heidegger claims, to an awareness of what the life of the peasant woman is like: how she must walk along rows of plants with the earth caking on her shoes; how aware she is of the weather and its impact on her life; etc. Throughout her life, she is able to rely on her shoes, for they make it possible for her to do the things she has to do without harming her feet.

How does this discussion of the painting illustrate the immense significance for our understanding of the nature of human life in general that Heidegger attributes to works of ark like this one? A first aspect to the effect (or *work*) of the work is its revelation of what Heidegger calls *the world* of the peasant woman to whom he takes the shoes to belong. At first blush, we can say Heidegger uses the word "world" not to refer to a specific object existing alongside other objects, but more analogously to our use of it in speaking of the *world* of the fashion model or the *world* of the student, in which it refers to the basic features of the lives of those engaging in these occupations. The world of the peasant woman, as Heidegger sees it revealed in van Gogh's painting, is one in which she has many cares and concerns, projects and plans. She has to plant and harvest seeds so that she can feed herself and her family. In order to do this successfully, she *relies on* the shoes we see in the painting, for they enable her to do what she needs to do.

But this means that van Gogh's painting does not just reveal the *world* of the peasant woman, as we might ordinarily use that term. In addition, it reveals the basic character that beings or entities have in her world, what Heidegger refers to as *equipmentality*. Here, Heidegger is relying on his analysis, first articulated in *Being and Time*, of what the fundamental structure of beings is for modern human beings. What he claims is that the things that we employ in our daily lives have the character of being objects of use – what he characterizes as the "ready-to-hand" rather than the "present-at-hand" character of the things of the Western philosophical tradition – so that we think of them in terms of their functions rather than their structures. A chair, from this point of view, is not most basically conceived as a piece of furniture with four legs but rather as a thing-for-sitting, for, after all, that's what we do with it.

Van Gogh's painting thus allows its viewers to grasp the fundamental structure of the world in which they, as well as the peasant woman, exist. The general category of "equipment" characterizes the way in which entities within that world are encountered. What this means is that we modern individuals take the world to consist of a set of *reliable* tools for realizing our purposes.

We are still not done with Heidegger's interpretation, for *Shoes* does not just reveal the *world* of the peasant woman, according to Heidegger; it also shows that world as emerging from the *earth*. Once again, we need to be careful in interpreting what this claim means, for Heidegger does not intend us to think of the planet we call "the earth." Speaking a bit loosely, we can call the earth that out of which the peasant's world is built – the literal earth she sows with seeds, but also the weather to which she must pay attention and upon which she depends, the leather from which her shoes are made, etc. Every world must take up what is available to it, namely, earth, and give it shape and form.

But the earth is not simply passive, allowing itself to be easily incorporated into a world. In Heidegger's view, world and earth exist in a tension that he dubs "strife," using a term whose significance he traces back to the pre-Socratics. What this indicates is that, just as much as a world needs to shape the earth in the manner that it requires, say by turning all entities into equipment, the world resists such incorporation. Earth and world thus exist in eternal strife for Heidegger.

This conflict between earth and world is important, for it explains an important aspect of Heidegger's view. He is a historicist in that he sees different historical epochs as having fundamentally different worlds that succeed one another. Our basic understanding of the world, one that we share with the peasant woman and that Heidegger characterizes as equipmentality at this point in his thinking, is one that distinguishes modern Western culture from other cultures and historical epochs. For Heidegger, the succession of such worlds is accounted for by the fact that the earth resists the attempts by a world to hold it steady, to incorporate it into a static structure.

This idea will emerge more clearly if we consider a different example of an art object that Heidegger discusses, namely a Greek temple. Although Heidegger introduces this example to show that his account applies to nonrepresentational art, it clarifies other aspects of his theory. For what Heidegger says of the Greek temple is that it gathers a people and allows the gods to be seen.

What Heidegger emphasizes is that the Greek world was fundamentally different than ours in that it was populated by a plurality of gods, a fact known to even the most casual reader of Greek literature. For the Greeks, Zeus and Hera were as real as, if not more real than, the middle-sized physical objects that analytic philosophers often take as their paradigmatic examples of real things. How are such gods able to make their appearance? Heidegger claims, following Nietzsche, that an essential function of Greek art was to allow the gods to come into the presence of mere mortals. A Greek temple like the Parthenon is not just the magnificent architectural achievement that we all see, but once was the place in which the gods could literally appear to the ancient Greeks.

One thing Heidegger does not mention in his discussion of the Greek temple is its present state as a ruin. However, if we focus on this feature of the temple, it will allow us to gain a deeper understanding of another aspect of his argument that we have already touched on: that a work of art always presents the world and earth as in strife. Anyone who looks at a Greek temple is drawn to how it rises out of the earth and stands there, a triumph of human creativity and ingenuity. Yet, in its present state, it also forces an awareness of our own subjection to forces that resist our plans and projects. Heidegger seeks to capture this awareness by saying that art discloses the eternal strife between earth and world.

The example of the Greek temple is also important because it shows that equipmentality is *not* a feature of the world of the Greeks. At the time of writing his *magnum opus*, *Being and Time*, Heidegger thought that he could lay out the most basic features of the world of humans – *Dasein* in his terms – and that the basic structure that beings had in this world were as equipment. Later – after his so-called *Kehre* or turn – he decided that a more historicist approach to worlds was required. Although all historical worlds of a people emerge from and are in strife with the earth – that from which they arise – there is no more specific determination of the nature of a

world that is possible. Through history, being manifests itself in different worlds that are specific to the historical periods in which they arise.

This example thus demonstrates how important history is to Heidegger's understanding of art. In different historical epochs, different worlds reveal themselves, that is, being manifests itself in different ways to the peoples of such epochs. Through art, we are able to become aware of the nature of such worlds.

Heidegger also claims that there is a specific feature that distinguishes works of art from other constructed entities, implements or equipment: a work of art always foregrounds its created nature. One example of this is the signature that generally is to be found in a painting. What a signature does is to mark a work as created by someone. In so doing, it individualizes the object, authorizing our treatment of it as a work rather than simply a useful thing. (One wonders whether the recent use of trademark labels as a type of status symbol on clothing casts some doubt on Heidegger's claim.)

All the elements are now in place for an elucidation of the formula, art is the setting-into-work of truth. And, indeed, after our detailed unpacking of Heidegger's essay, its meaning seems almost obvious. What this phrase means is that the social practice of art involves the creation of a work – that which is *set up* – that reveals the truth about human life. The truth that is revealed is the basic world-in-strife-with-earth unity that constitutes an historical epoch. Although our lives are unconsciously structured by the unity that makes up our age, it is only through such things as works of art that we become aware of this basic feature of our lives.

Heidegger's later writings on poetry

There is a difference between a Greek temple and van Gogh's painting that we have not discussed and that Heidegger does not mention in his essay. While many people may admire van Gogh's paintings, they do not play a significant role in the life of even Dutch society. However, a Greek temple was important in the lives of the ancient Greeks if for no other reason than to allow them access to their gods.

In his later writing on poetry (see, for example, Heidegger 1971) – in which poetry assumes pride of place as *the* art form of modernity – Heidegger both emphasizes the social function of art in the ancient world and bemoans its aestheticization in the modern world. Rather than make a world possible, art has become merely an opportunity for pleasure in the modern world.

Heidegger's thinking on art was influenced not only by his reading of Hölderlin, the German nineteenth-century poet who was a friend of Hegel's, but also by a serious encounter with the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche (1999) argued that art had lost its proper social function in modern society. Relying on an analysis of Greek tragedy, Nietzsche argued that art had once been more than a means of aesthetic satisfaction. For the Greeks, art – and his paradigm is the tragic drama of Aeschylus and Sophocles – was a way of understanding the truth about human life. Subsequent Western epochs had, for Nietzsche, been dominated by a blind optimism that had, among other things, resulted in an emasculated art that failed to plumb the depths of existence. Nonetheless, Nietzsche was, at the time of writing *The Birth of Tragedy*, hopeful that Wagner's operas would help reawaken the West to the real nature of human life.

Although Heidegger's thinking is influenced by various aspects of Nietzsche's thought, I here want to emphasize its historicist understanding of art. In his later writings on poetry, Heidegger accepts Nietzsche's view that art can no longer play the role it once did. He is also less sanguine than the early Nietzsche that a new heroic age is around the corner. As a result, he sees the poet as having to diagnose the malaise of the present age in order to prepare the way for the unlikely possibility that Western culture will be able to once again incorporate an authentic relationship to being.

Thinking critically about Heidegger

Heidegger's reflections on art are both relevant to modern discussions about art and insightful. In order to see this, it will be useful to consider the validity of some of his basic claims.

I have argued that Heidegger's view of art is holistic. Not only do I think that Heidegger is right about this, but I believe that many contemporary theories can be faulted for their failure to acknowledge all the different facets of artistic practice as equally basic to it. For example, the institutional theory of art developed by George Dickie focuses on the audience (what Heidegger calls "the preservers") for a work of art, those who constitute the artworld. It is generally agreed that such a view is inadequate because it leaves out the importance of the work itself, treating "art" only as an honorific title conveyed by a certain institution.

Heidegger also claims that art involves the disclosure of truth. As we have seen, this is a central feature of not only his theory of art, but the way in which he interprets works of art, understands their meaning.

A first problem is that Heidegger's claim that art discloses the strife of earth and world is too specific an understanding of the truths art might reveal to us. In his fascinating discussion of Cézanne's paintings, for example, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964) accepts a generally Heideggerean framework for interpreting art, but he argues that Cézanne's paintings focus on one specific aspect of the world, namely the way in which objects make themselves manifest to us prior to our incorporating them into our own plans and schemes. For one who accepts this interpretation of what Cézanne was striving to attain in his paintings, Heidegger's view will seem too specific.

It also might be suggested that Heidegger's view may well work for representational works like those of van Gogh and architectural works like a temple or cathedral, but that it doesn't apply to contemporary art, which is neither representational nor social in its nature.

While I don't want to claim that Heidegger's viewpoint is adequate for understanding all contemporary artistic endeavors, I do think that it gives us some purchase on some of the works that have been taken to be of central philosophic significance. Take Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades or such Andy Warhol works as *Brillo Box*. Arthur Danto (1964) has suggested that these works are about art itself, demonstrating that anything can now be art. A Heideggerean might counter that this thins out the meaning of such works, for the everyday things that they transfigure are implements, things that are manufactured for our use. Isn't it important to explain why such entities – they are not "mere things" as Danto suggests – are the ones employed in

the art of these two artists? And isn't a way to do that to think of such works as revealing our consumerist world to us, one in which these are the things that are nearest and dearest to us?

This example demonstrates that Heidegger's understanding of art remains useful to this day. In giving art a significant role in human beings' attempts to comprehend the nature of their existence, Heidegger moves art to the center of the agenda of philosophic reflection. Despite significant advances in both art and philosophic theory about it, Heidegger's view remains alive and challenging.

See also Hegel (Chapter 6), Nietzsche (Chapter 8), Phenomenology (Chapter 13), Postmodernism (Chapter 17), Definitions of art (Chapter 21), Ontology of art (Chapter 23), Value of art (Chapter 28), Art and knowledge (Chapter 37), Creativity (Chapter 42), Painting (Chapter 57), Architecture (Chapter 60).

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13
PHENOMENOLOGY
Merleau-Ponty and Sartre

Adrienne Dengerink Chaplin

What is phenomenology?

Phenomenology is a mode of philosophizing that aims to capture and articulate the original meanings of direct experience. It is motivated by a desire to look at the world afresh from the perspective of first-person, pre-reflective, "lived" experience. As such it has a close affinity with art. Merleau-Ponty puts it thus: phenomenology "consists in re-learning to look at the world … [it] is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but, like art, the act of bringing truth into being" (Merleau-Ponty 1998: xx).

Phenomenology as a school of thought emerged at the end of the nineteenth century in the school of Franz Brentano, and was developed by Edmund Husserl, and further, in many different ways, by Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Roman Ingarden, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, among others. What unites these varied thinkers is their particular *way* of doing philosophy. In Heidegger's words: "'phenomenology' signifies primarily a *concept of method*. It does not characterize the 'what' of the objects of philosophical research in terms of their content but the 'how' of such research" (Heidegger 1996: 24).

This new manner of philosophizing aims to take an unprejudiced look at the world, untainted by what Husserl, somewhat misleadingly, refers to as "the natural attitude." This attitude not only characterizes abstract, scientific modes of reflection but also common-sense thinking. In the natural attitude we approach the world with a particular set of attitudes and assumptions, such as the view that the world lies spread out before us in space and time, and the conception that knowledge consists of mental representations *inside* our consciousness. Husserl insists that it is essential to bracket or suspend such beliefs – also referred to as the "phenomenological reduction" or "epoché" – in order to regain a renewed sense of the original meaning – or "essence" – of the things that we encounter in the world.

It is sometimes thought that phenomenologists are opposed to systematic theory or science. This is not the case. They fully recognize the validity of scientific explanatory accounts of the world. They merely want to remind people that science itself is ultimately rooted in the phenomena of direct experience. As Husserl observes, "objects would be nothing at all for the cognizing subject if they did not 'appear' to

him, if he had of them no 'phenomenon'" (Moran and Mooney 2002: 125). Phenomenology aims to apprehend the essences of those phenomena by means of immediate experience and direct intuition. The term "phenomenon" comes from the Greek verb *phainesthai*, which means "to appear" or "to manifest itself." Phenomenology thus studies both the way things appear *and* the way the world reveals itself. Its method is primarily descriptive. It aims to illuminate the meaning of phenomena without resorting to causal or scientific explanations.

It is important not to confuse phenomenology with the philosophical doctrine known as *phenomenalism*. Although things reveal themselves *through* their appearance, they are not, as phenomenalists would have it, reducible to it. For Merleau-Ponty phenomenology is "a philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' before reflection begins – as an inalienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status" (Merleau-Ponty 1998: vii).

It is a key feature of all phenomenological inquiry that it understands consciousness – whether thinking, feeling, remembering or otherwise – as "intentional," that is, directed towards an object. Consciousness is always consciousness *of* something irrespective of whether that thing actually exists (trees, houses, etc.) or not (unicorns, ghosts, etc.). Intentionality belongs to the essential structure of consciousness.

Phenomenologists after Husserl have taken up different aspects of his thinking and developed them in many directions. What unites them all, however, is the renewed attention for pre-scientific, pre-reflective experience, as it appears to first-person human consciousness. Although long neglected in the world of Anglo-American aesthetics, this focus of attention makes phenomenology a fertile source of reflection on art. Like art, phenomenology seeks to restore the richness of the world *as* immediately experienced. For Merleau-Ponty the phenomenological attitude involves "the same kind of attentiveness and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the same will to seize the meaning of the world" as can be found in the works of writers and painters such as Balzac, Proust, Valéry and Cézanne (Merleau-Ponty 1998: xxi). For Sartre, phenomenology forms the foundation of his existentialist aesthetics.

Sartre

Existentialist phenomenology

The French novelist, playwright, critic, political activist and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–80) was one of the most influential intellectuals of the twentieth century. After studying at the elite École Normale Supérieure in Paris from 1924 to 1929, he spent a year in Berlin (1933–34) where he became acquainted with the phenomenological philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger, who became the principal influences on his thinking. Despite having lived in Berlin at the time of Hitler's rise to Chancellor, he only became politically aware and engaged once the war had broken out, upon which he joined the Resistance movement. In 1945 he cofounded, with Merleau-Ponty, the literary, political and philosophical review *Les Temps Modernes*, resigned from his teaching post, and began living as an independent writer.

Although known mainly for his radical existentialism, the subtitles of his two main works – *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination* (2004) and *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1984) – reveal that both works were written explicitly as phenomenological studies. There is indeed a close link between his later existentialist writings on, among others, sociopolitical issues and literature, and these earlier, phenomenological works. The key notions linking the two periods are: imagination, negation, nothingness, freedom and commitment. In order to trace this trajectory as it applies to his aesthetic theory, the place to begin is his seminal work *The Imaginary*.

Imagination

As one of the most provocative accounts of the nature of imagination in Western philosophical literature, *The Imaginary* is a vital, if often neglected, source for aesthetic theory. The focus of the work is the nature of the imagining consciousness as it relates to other forms of consciousness or thought. It should be noted that Sartre's use of the term "consciousness" does not imply the nowadays commonly held distinctions between, first, consciousness as a property of certain mental states and processes, second, the states and processes themselves, also referred to as "thought," and, third, the putative entity running and consisting of those processes, typically referred to as "mind." Sartre's usage lies closest to the second understanding – that is, of consciousness as thought.

Sartre rejects the then widely held view that mental images reside *in* consciousness or the mind. He refers to this position as "the illusion of immanence." Instead, he holds that thinking something internally and seeing something externally are not two fundamentally different types of experience. The point is argued by means of a classical phenomenological introspective description:

> When I perceive a chair, it would be absurd to say that the chair is *in* my perception. My perception is … a certain consciousness and the chair is the object *of* that consciousness. Now I close my eyes and I produce the image of the chair that I just perceived. The chair, now being given as imaged, can no more enter *into* consciousness than previously. An image of a chair is not and cannot be a chair … It is simply that consciousness is *related* to this same chair in two different ways. In both cases, it aims at the chair in its concrete individuality, in its corporeality. Only, in one of the cases, the chair is "encountered" by consciousness; in the other, it is not.
>
> (Sartre 2004: 6–7)

Instead of asserting, therefore, that one has an image of Pierre *in* one's mind, it would be better to reject such spatial metaphors and say that one has an "imaging consciousness of Pierre" or a "consciousness of Pierre-as-imaged." For Sartre an image is nothing other than a relation. My attention is not directed at the image of Pierre, but directly at Pierre as a person. In other words, my consciousness is always a consciousness – a thinking, perceiving, willing, remembering, desiring, fearing – of something *external* to my consciousness, even if fictional.

Having said that, Sartre goes on to explain that each consciousness relates to its object in its own way. In order to examine these various forms of consciousness in more detail, Sartre undertakes a comprehensive survey of what he calls the "image family." This family includes portraits, photographs, reflections, schematic drawings, dreams, hallucinations and many others. Sartre holds to a weak resemblance theory, supplemented by a strong reader and viewer response theory. To read a visual image *as* a representation of something it will need to be "animated" by the viewer. Precisely because there is never an equivocal, perfect resemblance between a picture and what it depicts – a depiction, for instance, need not share either size, shape, color or texture with what it represents – viewers will have to bring their own knowledge and expectations to the image in order to create a meaning or "sense" in it. A similar dynamic underlies our ability to see things in clouds or ink blots.

Anticipating the Gombrich–Wollheim discussion of "seeing-in" and "seeing-as," Sartre distinguishes between the matter of a picture *as a thing* – the canvas, brush strokes, the vapor of the cloud – and the matter of a picture *as an image* or representation of something. He refers to the latter as "the analogon." The analogon is the physical matter of the image *to the extent that* it allows us to see it as a representation of something: "it is the invitation that functions as an analogon and it is through it that my attention is directed at Pierre [rather than at the portrait of Pierre]" (ibid.: 22). As such it serves as the "analogue" or "equivalent of perception."

For Sartre this is in principle not different in the case of mental imagery. As noted, all images, whether physical or mental, are defined by their intentionality. Hence, seeing a portrait of Pierre and trying to recall Pierre in memory are both particular forms of consciousness of Pierre. Even though mental images do not have the status of entities – this, indeed, was precisely the "illusion of immanence" – their basic intentional structure is the same as that of physical portraits: both mental and physical images consist of a direction *toward* Pierre. In the same way as a physical portrait provides the "analogon" of Pierre, so does a mental image of him.

How then does Sartre's analysis of pictorial and mental imagery help us understand the nature of imagination? Here we encounter an important distinction in Sartre between mere *imaging* – for instance, remembering, fearing, desiring – involving mental images, and *imagining*. Unlike other, more passive forms of consciousness involving images, *imagining* involves a deliberate act: "it is an incantation destined to make the object of one's thought, the thing one desires, appear in such a way that one can take possession of it" (ibid.: 125). Crucially, however, unlike perceiving consciousness, which is directed to its object as present and therefore directly apprehensible, the imagining consciousness posits its object as nonpresent. In the imagination we typically think of an object or person *as* absent.

Irreality and nothingness

For Sartre, to imagine an object (or person) that is not present is to posit it as an "irreality" or "nothingness." This can be done in three ways: the imagining consciousness can posit the object as nonexisting (e.g. unicorn), as existing but absent (e.g. "Pierre") or as a possibility, without committing oneself either way (e.g. a car run on water).

What all three forms of imagining have in common is the "negation" of present reality. Such a negation is *not* a quality of judgment or logical category. It is, says Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, a "pre-judicative" attitude (Sartre 1984: 7). He illustrates this by means of the phenomenological description of someone planning to meet a friend in a café. Using a typical figure–ground model of Gestalt theory he describes how, upon entering the café, the people and objects start to function as the undifferentiated backdrop – the "ground" – against which he hopes to find his friend – the "figure." As it turns out, Pierre is not there. However, because of his focused and expectant attention on Pierre, he has, as it were, contributed to the *creation* of his absence. In the whole of the café Pierre "stands out" in his absence. In this way Sartre's phenomenological method reaches the seemingly paradoxical conclusion that "nothing" turns out to be "something." The negative *judgment* "Pierre is not here" is grounded in the *experience* of absence and nonbeing. In other words, negation is not primarily a logical category but a pre-logical, *intuited* phenomenon.

This emphasis on negation and nothingness explains why imagining is not only different from perceiving but also from "weaker" forms of imaging such as remembering. In recalling something from the past, I posit something as given and real – but past. When imagining something, however, I posit something as nongiven and irreal.

This positing of the irreal or nothingness is also the key to Sartre's view of art. Having distinguished between the material base of a picture and its analogon, he maintains that the depicted object in the latter – say, Charles VIII – is always an *irreality* to the extent that it can only be apprehended by the intentional act of an imagining consciousness:

> As this Charles VIII, who is an *irreality* in so far as he is grasped *on* the canvas, is precisely the object of our appreciations (it is he that we say "moves us," "is painted with intelligence, with power, with grace," etc.), we are led to recognize that in a picture the aesthetic object is an *irreality*.
>
> (Sartre 2004: 189)

Hence, instead, of conceiving the picture as the *realization* of an idea of the imagination – as do Collingwood or Croce – it is an *irrealization*. Even acting works like this: "it is not that the character is *realized* in the actor, but that the actor is *irrealized* in the character" (ibid.: 191).

Freedom and commitment

For Sartre, the imaginative power to negate the present is a prerequisite for free consciousness. In order to think the world other than it is, consciousness must become free from the constraints of the world. All freedom implies choices. The human capacity to choose is a central theme throughout Sartre's existentialist political and literary writings. Whether we like it or not, we cannot escape our responsibility to make choices in life; we are, in his celebrated phrase, "condemned to be free." To deny or refuse that freedom because it is unwelcome or unbearable is what Sartre calls acting in "bad faith" (*mauvaise foi*), which is a form of self-deception. The fate of having to choose is a recurrent theme in Sartre's novels and essays. His characters,

whether fictional (Roquentin in *Nausea*, Garcin in *No Exit*) or historical (Tintoretto, Giacometti, Baudelaire), are continuously placed in situations in which they have to choose to live *either* authentically and freely according to their own choices *or* to act out preestablished social roles, conforming to society's expectations and bourgeois value systems. Even when severely constrained by their particular circumstances they are nevertheless forced – even doomed – to make choices so as to decide their own future. This also underlies existentialism's well-known maxim "existence before essence": humans will always have to define themselves through their own choices.

For Sartre, writing itself is such a choice. His call for committed literature (*littérature engagée*) in *What Is Literature?* is precisely a call to reveal the world and people to each other so that they may resume full responsibility for their situation:

> [I]f I am given this world with its injustices, it is not so that I may contemplate them coldly, but that I may animate them with my indignation, that I may disclose them and create them with their nature as injustices, that is, as abuses to be suppressed.
>
> (Sartre 1988: 67)

Somewhat surprisingly, Sartre claims that only prose, using conventional, instrumental language, rather than poetry or painting can be truly committed. The poet, like the painter is "mute," because he considers words as things to contemplate and not as signs to communicate. Referring to Picasso's *Guernica* he exclaims: "does anyone think that it won over a single heart to the Spanish cause?" (ibid.: 28). One may, of course, query Sartre's claim that poetry, painting or music cannot reveal or disclose the world as effectively as prose. The claim also seems to undermine the power of the imagination as it relates to aesthetic objects. This tension between "aesthetic poetry" and "committed prose" reflects a tension between Sartre's (earlier) phenomenological and his (later) existentialist aesthetics. What happened in between was the Second World War. It was also the period in which he was to meet up again with Merleau-Ponty.

Merleau-Ponty

Phenomenology of perception

Although Merleau-Ponty (1908–61) had been a contemporary of Sartre at the École Normale Supérieure, it was only during the war that they reconnected again. Together with other left-wing French intellectuals they initially came together to join the Resistance, but it was their shared interest in phenomenology, and in particular in the work of Husserl, that drew them into a long-standing – and, as it turned out, volatile – relationship. In his memoir "Merleau-Ponty *Vivant*" Sartre writes, "the keywords were spoken: phenomenology, existence. We discovered our real concern … Each of us viewed the work being done by the other as an unexpected, and sometimes hostile deviation from his own. Husserl became our bond and our division" (Sartre 1998: 568). Merleau-Ponty's seminal work *Phenomenology of Perception* (1998) can be considered as much a response to Sartre as a dialogue with Husserl. Published two

years after *Being and Nothingness* it deals with many of the same themes: subjectivity and objectivity, the *cogito*, the body, the "world," being, time and freedom.

Even so, there are also some undeniable differences. Some of these can be explained by the fact that Sartre drew exclusively on Husserl's earlier work, whereas Merleau-Ponty had also been influenced by Husserl's as-yet-unpublished later writings, which – after they had been rescued from the Nazis – he had been able to read in the recently established Husserl Archive in Louvain (Stewart 1998: xviii, xxi). One of those works, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, written just before his death in 1938, introduces Husserl's notion of "life-world" and indicates a shift from a notion of subjectivity as pure consciousness or transcendental ego to the kind of embodied understanding of subjectivity which would become the central theme in Merleau-Ponty's work. Influenced also by Heidegger's notions of "being-in-the-world" and "facticity" in *Being and Time* (1996), Merleau-Ponty developed a fresh understanding of the "body-subject's" primordial contact with the world, rooted in a distinctive notion of "perception."

Perception as bodily being-in-the-world

Perception, for Merleau-Ponty, is not a question of deliberately taking up a position or a specific act. It is also unlike the empiricist understanding of perception as the passive reception of isolated sense impressions that are subsequently formed into mental representations or ideas. Like Sartre, Merleau-Ponty holds that we can never perceive such "atomic," isolated sensations because we can only perceive things as figures against a ground and in relation to other figures. He illustrates this with various experiments taken from Gestalt theory, such as Müller-Lyer's optical illusion of the two parallel lines of equal length, which, because of the addition of differently positioned arrows at their ends, end up being perceived by most people as being unequal. Merleau-Ponty's point is to show that these "mistakes" are not perceptual anomalies but disclosures of the way perception normally works. Perception has to be understood in an holistic sense as the active, bodily mediated involvement in the world, prior to this being symbolically represented:

> [M]y field of perception is constantly filled with a play of colours, noises and fleeting tactile sensations which I cannot relate precisely to the context of my clearly perceived world, yet which I nevertheless immediately "place" in the world, without ever confusing them with my daydreams.
>
> (Merleau-Ponty 1998: x)

Because of this bodily engagement with the world there is a certain constancy of perception. When someone walks away from us into the distance that person is not perceived as smaller. Likewise, we do not consider the color of the carpet to change when a shadow falls on it. These experiences of constancy, says Merleau-Ponty, are "grounded in the primordial constancy of the world as the horizon of all our experiences" (ibid.: 313). When looking from a second-floor window and seeing the top of the hats of the people walking below us, we do not see discs or circles but *people*. Hence, in order to perceive, we both *discover* meaning and *bring* meaning to the world.

Perception, then, is not a static affair but an active involvement with the world we live in. We are not primarily spectators of the world but active participants in it even as we perceive. Perception is a form of action. This also applies to our intentionality. This is not something confined to the mind or consciousness; it goes "all the way down." When I reach out my hand for a cup of coffee, there are not two actions, first my thinking about the action and then my arm responding to perform the action; it is one integrated bodily action. "Consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body" (ibid.: 138–39). Consciousness does not need to imply language: "my body has its world, or understands its world, without having to make use of my 'symbolic' or 'objectifying function'" (ibid.: 140–41). Driving a car, playing an instrument and so forth, all testify to the body's capacity to find its way in the world – to judge distances, speed, touch, pressure, positions – without resorting to language or other symbolic representation. Even speech should not be seen as a separate act. It does not *translate* ready-made thought, but *accomplishes* it. The speaker's speech *is* thought. This also applies to the writer and novelist. Clearly, but not necessarily fairly, targeting Sartre he writes "the novelist's task is not to expound ideas or even analyse characters, but to depict an inter-human event, ripening and bursting it upon us with no ideological commentary" (ibid.: 151).

The body as a work of art

The notion of the unity of a "vehicle" and its meaning or expression also applies to the work of art. At various places in his work Merleau-Ponty compares the expressiveness of the body to that of a work of art. Just as expressions and gestures of the body are indistinguishable from what they are perceived as expressing, so works of art or music cannot be separated from what they express. That does not mean that they do not *say* or *mean* anything. They are not, as Sartre would have it, mute. It is just that, in a picture "the idea is incommunicable by means other than the display of colours" and that in a piece of music "the musical meaning of a sonata is inseparable from the sounds which are its vehicle" (ibid.: 150, 182). There is no *idea* behind the work of art. The painter thinks with his brush and paints. Both language and painting are rooted in the primordial, expressive gestures of the human body. "I do not have a body, I *am* my body." We have to reject any Cartesian subject–object, mind–body or consciousness–world dichotomies.

For Merleau-Ponty, "the theory of the body is already a theory of perception" (ibid.: 203). The philosophical challenge is to give a proper account of this bodily perception. In discussing the meaning of colors he notes: "we must rediscover how to live these colours as our body does, that is as peace or violence in concrete form" (ibid.: 211). Emphasizing that we always experience things in their unity of style and synaesthetic value, he observes that "the brittleness, hardness, transparency and crystal ring of glass all translate in a single manner of being" (ibid.: 319). And he refers to Cézanne as declaring that "a picture contains within itself even the smell of the landscape" (ibid.: 318).

What all these quotations from *Phenomenology of Perception* make clear is that, for Merleau-Ponty, there is a clear analogy between phenomenology and art. This is made even more explicit in his three essays on painting, which also represent three

different periods in his thought: "Cézanne's Doubt," "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" and "Eye and Mind" (Johnson and Smith 1993).

Essays on painting

Written in the same year as *Phenomenology of Perception*, "Cézanne's Doubt" echoes many of its main themes. Crucially, Merleau-Ponty considers Cézanne the paradigmatic example of a phenomenologist working with paint rather than words. Cézanne's struggle to express what exists while remaining faithful to the phenomena was no different from that of the phenomenological philosopher. Both tried to overcome the traditional dichotomy between, on the one hand, the intellectualist's prioritizing of the mind as, for instance, in classical line drawings with linear perspective, and, on the other, the empiricist's privileging of the senses, as with the Impressionists' obsessive attention to the eye's reception of light and color. What Merleau-Ponty recognizes in Cézanne is a similar fascination with the realm where the self and the world fuse in an embodied encounter. When he quotes Cézanne as saying, "the landscape thinks itself in me, and I am its consciousness," it is easy to see how this resonates with his own emphasis on the unity of the subject and the object. A good example of how Cézanne deals with this are some of his cubist still lifes: instead of viewing things from the standpoint of an immobile fixed monocular eye – as a camera does – we perceive the world by moving around and with a prior experience and future expectation of the things encountered. This explains why Cézanne's painted objects can be seen from different angles at the same time, on tilted surfaces and against broken horizontals. They render visible how we actually *do* perceive things in our lived encounter with them, something which is often taken for granted. It is, as Husserl would say, a "returning to the things themselves" in their primordial way of being. Even so, Merleau-Ponty remains fully aware that we can never reach back beyond our own horizons and that our perception of the world and ourselves will therefore inevitably remain incomplete: "the most important lesson which the [phenomenological] reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction" (Merleau-Ponty 1998: viii).

The central theme of "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," is the concept of style as a historical and intersubjective phenomenon and as rooted in the artist's sedimented, embodied perception of the world. Written as a critique of André Malraux's grand narrative of art in *The Voices of Silence* (1978), Merleau-Ponty rejects Malraux's idealist notion of style as the genius artist's individual expression of a Hegelian world Spirit, and argues for style as a *mode* of perception and "a way of inhabiting the world" (Johnson and Smith 1993: 91). This mode of being is the habituated response to the nuances and secondary qualities offered by the "allusive logic" of the world itself. Although Merleau-Ponty does not use the term "aesthetic" in this context – he does so only twice in the entire *Phenomenology of Perception* – his notion of style seems to come close to what one might call the "aesthetic dimension" of life, that is, the realm of felt but nameless qualities and nuances. A painting can express such *silent* qualities only indirectly and allusively. But so can a novel. Unlike Sartre, Merleau-Ponty does not draw a sharp distinction between painting (or poetry) and literature (or prose) or, as we have seen, between imagination and perception. For him, "like a painting, a novel expresses tacitly" (Johnson and Smith 1993: 113).

In "Eye and Mind," the last work published before his sudden death in 1961, Merleau-Ponty develops this theme further as it bears on the difference between art and science. For him, science has given up living in things whereas art and especially painting "draws on the fabric of brute meaning" (ibid.: 123). We are thus brought back to the *raison d'être* of phenomenology in general and its analogy with painting. True philosophy, as Merleau-Ponty has it, "consists in re-learning to look at the world" (Merleau-Ponty 1998: xx) and true painting "celebrates no other enigma but that of visibility" (Johnson and Smith 1993: 127). Both make vision *itself* visible.

In their attention to the senses, phenomenological aestheticians could be said to return aesthetics to its eighteenth-century origins. "Aesthetics," from the Greek *aesthemi* – "to see," was originally conceived by its founder, Alexander Baumgarten, as a science of sense perception and feeling, to be valued as independent sources of knowing. However, as Shusterman rightly observes, Baumgarten did not in fact take the body seriously (Shusterman 2000: 263–67). This is because he associated the "higher" senses of sight and hearing primarily with mental activity. By contrast, phenomenology grounds the senses in the embodied subject in its reciprocal relation with the world. This allows it to recapture something of our rich, pre-reflective experience. In doing so they have made a significant contribution not only to our understanding of vision and perception but also to that of art and aesthetics.

See also Heidegger (Chapter 12), Imagination and make-believe (Chapter 31), Depiction (Chapter 35), Style (Chapter 43), Literature (Chapter 50), Painting (Chapter 57).

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14
ADORNO

Theodore Gracyk

Theodor W. Adorno (1903–69) is increasingly regarded as the most important contributor to twentieth-century German aesthetics. Well-read in German and French literature, he studied composition with Alban Berg and considered a career as a concert pianist. His many volumes of writings on music, philosophy and culture are divided between dense philosophical theory and a relatively more accessible body of musical and literary criticism. However, Adorno has a mixed reputation. *Aesthetic Theory* (1997 [1970]) and other major works are repetitive, obscure and devoid of straightforward argumentation or clear organization – perhaps intentionally so. The more accessible essays strike many readers as the unjustified ravings of a pessimistic elitist. Sympathetic readers excuse these apparent faults as marks of integrity and as the only writing strategies available to a philosopher who has come to doubt modern philosophy's ability to address the human condition. As such, his obscurities and exaggerations appear to be deliberate, defensible strategies for liberating readers from historically acquired blinders. He warned that the nuances of his German writings are untranslatable.

Adorno was born in Frankfurt am Main. He attended and then taught at Frankfurt's Goethe University, leading to his lifelong association with its Institute for Social Research. Nicknamed "The Frankfurt School," its membership preferred the label of "critical theory." In 1933, the Institute's neo-Marxist slant and concentration of Jewish intellectuals made it a target of Adolf Hitler's National Socialist government. However, the Institute's financial independence permitted relocation outside Germany. Adorno fled to England in 1934. In 1938 the Institute secured him temporary funding to do research on the sociological impact of radio music broadcasts. Relocating to New York City, his views and methodology soon led to a termination of funding. He moved to Southern California, where he wrote extensively on music and popular culture and became an American citizen. He advised fellow exile Thomas Mann on the aesthetics of avant-garde music espoused in the novel *Doctor Faustus*. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, cowritten with Max Horkheimer (2007 [1947]), remains an influential denial of cultural progress and a core document in critical theory. Adorno returned to Germany in 1949, resumed teaching, became the Institute's director in 1960, and was a prominent public intellectual. His long-anticipated *Aesthetic Theory* was nearly complete when he died suddenly in 1969. It appeared posthumously the next year.

A case can be made for Martin Heidegger's greater importance within recent German philosophy and aesthetics. However, Adorno's writings offer a more sustained, detailed and complex exploration of art. He attacks Heidegger as a proponent of an illusory authenticity, whose naivety about the limitations of philosophical language makes him an unwitting apologist for the corruption of modern art and culture (Adorno 1973a [1964]). Given Heidegger's parallel worries about the status of art in modern culture, Adorno's harsh analysis can seem extreme and implausible. Nonetheless, it illustrates his central thesis about art and culture. They have almost ceased to exist, for imposters have taken their place. Adorno's immersion in the history of German aesthetics leads him to think that Heidegger's philosophy is like the music of Igor Stravinsky and Dmitri Shostakovich. Their music joins the writings of Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre in the category of high culture. Despite this classification, they are no more valuable than horoscopes, Hollywood B movies and neon lights. The differentiation that makes them suitable for use by different social groups cannot mask a deeper functional affinity. They are poisonous consumable products that perpetuate alienation and reinforce totalitarianism. Against Heidegger and Stravinsky, Adorno champions autonomous art as one of the few remaining tools for enlightenment. (Again and again, he defends the music of Arnold Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School.) Art exploits form in novel ways, inviting a rich cognitive response. In many of his writings and in scores of public interviews and radio talks, he warns of the dangers of replacing art with the trash produced by corporations, governments and the other arms of the culture industry.

Influences, cultural location and methodology

Adorno occupies a pivotal historical position. His overwhelming concern is the development of modernism in art, philosophy and the general culture. His writings anticipate many themes that are central to postmodernism. Yet some of his major ideas are contrary to postmodernism. For example, Adorno seems postmodern in his rejection of foundational first truths and his related position on language. Language is not a neutral tool for encoding and sharing language-independent truths. It is an evolving social artifact. Consequently, cultural history is an invisible coconspirator in every conceptually determinate judgment. It is not simply that culturally sanctioned vocabularies limit thinking in each realm of discourse. Contingencies of grammar impose rules on sentence construction and therefore on judgment formation. Extended patterns of communication, such as book chapters, impose their own schematic logic. Adorno therefore warns against the tendency to be swept along by "the brackish stream of stale language" that produces clichés and banal thinking (Adorno 2006: 85). Not surprisingly, his writings frequently become self-reflective about the genealogy of the language available for thinking through a particular problem. Furthermore, the generality of language always creates "separation of subject matter and thought" and obscures elements of whatever it references; echoing Friedrich Nietzsche, Adorno observes that "language imprisons those who speak it" (Adorno 1991a: 189). Each sentence diverts our thinking away from some

dimensions of its subject matter in order to culturally privilege others. As a consequence, human rationality is constrained by the accumulated contingencies of culture. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* focuses on the modern narrowing of human reason to instrumental rationality, where reason's sole legitimate function is to determine the most systematic way to achieve goals that are not themselves subject to rational scrutiny. At the same time, Adorno departs sharply from postmodernism in his insistence that art permits an escape from the prison house of language, permitting the presentation of genuine "truth content" (*Wahrheitsgehalt*). For Adorno, genuine autonomy is present in art, as a precondition of its truth content. Every successful artwork provides nondiscursive knowledge that sidesteps the conceptual blinders of instrumental rationality: "Artworks participate in enlightenment because they do not lie" (Adorno 1997: 5). Consequently, Adorno rejects the postmodern tendency to treat authentic art as continuous with popular or mass culture. They are the dialectally opposed extremes of modern culture.

Adorno's philosophy comes into focus through his many engagements with his intellectual heritage. There are extended discussions of Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Georg Lukács and his Frankfurt School colleague, Walter Benjamin. Adorno's reflections on Kant, Hegel and Marx contain dizzying reinterpretations and then critiques of their central ideas. To a significant degree, his aesthetic theory is a second-order response to the history of aesthetics, so that "*Aesthetic Theory* is a work of meta-aesthetics" (Zuidervaart 1991: 8). There are also many writings in which an unnamed interlocutor is only present through allusion, as when he asserts, "The whole is the false," varying Hegel's assertion that the whole is the true without identifying it as such (Adorno 2006: 50). Although Adorno says that Hegel is the most important philosopher in Western thought, he directs equal or greater admiration toward Kant, whom he first read during adolescence under the guidance of Siegfried Kracauer. To extend one of Adorno's own metaphors, his historical view aligns Kant's philosophy with Bach's music, as the essential precursors of the parallel triumphs of Hegel and Beethoven (Adorno 1998: 10).

Adorno's readings of his predecessors can come across as unfair distortions. A more sympathetic reading recognizes that he is both a Marxist and not a Marxist, both a Hegelian and not a Hegelian, and so on with his other influences. For Adorno, concepts are not fixed categories. Because language and thought are socially inflected, all concepts are cultural products with sociohistorical implications. Furthermore, they evolve. We can never fully recover their meanings. Kant's writings about autonomy and enlightenment cannot mean today what they meant to his contemporaries. In parallel fashion, the art of the past cannot be for us what it was for its initial audience. Schoenberg's transcriptions of Bach are truer to Bach than performances on "period" instruments (Adorno 1981: 146; see also "Authenticity in performance," Chapter 44 of this volume). Likewise, the history of philosophy yields its continuing relevance when it is read against the grain (Adorno 1993a: 139).

Adorno uses several distinct writing techniques to engage his readers. *Minima Moralia* (2006 [1951]) employs Nietzschean aphorisms that make it a manageable and engaging introduction to his views on art and culture. At the other extreme, *Aesthetic Theory* has many paragraphs that meander through five or more pages. One translator

observes of it that "a semblance of progressive argumentation" replaces genuine argumentation (Adorno 1997: xiv). As in so much of his work, the book's key points evolve from three sources. First, they derive from his philosophy of history. The implications of ideas and social practices unfold over time. Yet their human consequences are never entirely preordained. Thus, aesthetic concepts such as "form" and "beauty" require repeated reinterpretation over time. Second, he explores the materiality of particular cases. A hit dance tune, Mickey Rooney's appearance in a film version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* (op. 123) are equally interesting, for each one betrays a practical making of something out of materials. "The choice of material, its use, and the limitations of that use, are an essential element of production" (Adorno 1997: 148). However, "material" has a broad meaning for Adorno. The materiality of each particular includes the formal rules and stylistic practices that directed and limited its production process. And materiality has a historical dimension. Every product of modern culture displays some degree of capitulation to society and its dominant economic structure. Yet every production is a fresh chance to resist the material that is employed. Where a cultural product displays resistance, it is authentic art. Close analysis is needed to reveal which particular cases of music, painting, literature and theater are authentically self-resisting. These analyses are the material element in his allegiance to a material dialectic. Third, Adorno frequently employs analogy. One important analogy concerns the relationship between philosophy and art. If ordinary language and Hollywood movies are socially compelled to support the status quo, then why suppose that academic publishing escapes this fate? But if authentic artworks can speak truth, then philosophy texts should adopt analogous techniques. It has become a cliché to say that Adorno wrote "atonal philosophy" by modeling his writing style on Schoenberg's atonal music (e.g. Jay 1984).

An antiessentialist account of art

Adorno denies that art can be defined (Adorno 1997: 2). He therefore focuses on recent trends in art, which can only be understood by contrast with the "vestiges" of "art's past circumstances" that continue to cling to it (Adorno 1997: 3). Although understanding the past is essential for understanding the present, art's origins do not fully determine its later stages. Consequently, art cannot be understood by unpacking a static concept of art. Philosophy of art must engage with complex and contradictory historical developments. From this starting point, Adorno hopes to identify a future for art.

Adorno's methodological interest in antinomies is nowhere more evident than in his thesis that modern artworks are both historically determined and spontaneously generated. They both reflect and transcend their sociohistorical origins. Every successful artwork is both a material thing and a unique formal structure. Artworks are simultaneously content laden and autonomous. To the extent that they are autonomous through the absence of direct social utility, they become socially transformative. Thanks to the second strand of each of these oppositions, art is uniquely capable of preserving the Enlightenment's promise of human freedom in the face of our

collectively imposed standardization and alienation. However, this promise must be continually renewed by fresh art. There is a real possibility that art is dying out.

In valuing art as a unique mode of social criticism, Adorno endorses both artistic cognitivism and formalism. He rethinks artistic communication by distinguishing between representation and mimesis. For example, Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) represents a specific historical event. However, the representational picturing of bull, horse, lightbulb and grieving mother can and should be distinguished from the mimetic power of its artistic form. Artists have a duty to bear witness to the incessant suffering that we inflict on one another. Yet the painting's power does not reside in its capacity to incite empathy with the represented suffering. The deliberate artistic choices involved in producing *Guernica* – the monochrome surface and fractured, fragmented point of view – generate a unique, particular form. The painting's success derives from its cubist rejection of formulaic social realism. Thus, it displays Picasso's style (and his own history) without being a formulaic Picasso. The painting *represents* suffering people and animals, but this content can and should be distinguished from the use of form to achieve "mimetic comportment" in a "nonconceptual affinity" with the social contradictions that inform it (Adorno 1997: 54). There is always a gap between a representation and what it represents, but there is always an affinity, too. The appreciative viewer recognizes and internalizes the gap, generating an "aesthetic shudder [that] cancels the distance held by the viewer" (Adorno 1997: 269). The sublime, rather than the classically beautiful, pervades Adorno's aesthetic standards.

In a successful artwork, the mimetic moment invites cognitive reflection on the sociohistorical conditions within it. In successful reflection, "Form converges with critique. It is that which artworks prove self-critical: what in the work rebels against any untransformed residue" (Adorno 1997: 144). In literature, Adorno praises the way that Marcel Proust's resistance to "the graphic image" highlights the writing's "graphic sign system" as a basis for successful mimesis (Adorno 1992: 30). Adorno criticizes Sartre's plays as self-sabotaging, didactic displays of existentialism. Sartre fails to understand that artistic success arises "solely through artistic form" (Adorno 1992: 80). Unfortunately, few people in modern society possess the knowledge and habits required to recognize genuine displays of rebellion. Most people are ignorant of philosophy, yet "The truth content of an artwork requires philosophy" (Adorno 1997: 341). The moment of reflection requires *philosophical* intervention that supplies language "in order to say what [art] is unable to say" (Adorno 1997: 72). Often, it requires aesthetic theory.

The binding glue in Adorno's analysis of art is ontological contextualism, the view that otherwise identical things possess very different properties according to the context of their creation. For Adorno, *Guernica* is not about universal human suffering. It is an autonomous work of art. Yet it is a product of its time and place; *Guernica* is to be interpreted in light of Germany's bid for domination (Adorno 1991a: 87). Although Adorno uses no such phrase, his ontological contextualism is strikingly similar to that of the American philosopher Arthur Danto, who maintains that artworks belong to "a different world, an *art* world, a world of *interpreted things*" (Danto 1981: 135). Communicative artifacts "make different statements depending upon a variety of contextual factors" (Danto 1981: 133). For artworks, the most important contextual factor is their position within the history of art. Adorno articulates these

points years before Danto, but Adorno complicates the position with two additional points. First, artworks should be interpreted in relation to "the guilt context of the living" – a phrase appropriated from Walter Benjamin (Adorno 1997: 144). The art world is not a closed system. It arises from and therefore reflects all of modernity. Second, Danto thinks that art became self-reflexive in the latter half of the twentieth century. Art began to make philosophical statements about art. Adorno thinks that this state of affairs is simply the norm for autonomous art within modernism. From Bach to Picasso, all modern art is self-reflexive. However, art's truth content is reserved for audiences who engage with it by philosophically interpreting it.

Artistic autonomy is both objective and historically contextual. As such, there is no contradiction in maintaining that autonomy is a condition of authentic art while also allowing that all premodern art – the neolithic cave paintings of Altamira or the Ghent Altarpiece (1426–32) – consists of functional artifacts. In other words, the stance of art for art's sake is a historical development in which some cultural workers came to be rewarded for creating forms that resist audiences' conditioned expectations, including the audience's expectation of immediate gratification or pleasure. For Adorno, the important paradox is that "art becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art" (Adorno 1997: 225). When art functions as mere entertainment, as so much of it does, it does not challenge prevailing values. Taking a cue from Kant, Adorno proposes that art is autonomous when elements of its form are unprecedented. As such, autonomy interjects purposelessness into human making, which is always purposeful. However, because the purposelessness arises from violations of expectations, autonomy requires the artwork to be embedded in a history of art. Therefore art is inherently social, for each artwork's autonomy depends on what it stands against. Authentic art is therefore both antisocial and socially engaged, and unqualified autonomy is illusory.

As suggested by the title of *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno does not assume that either philosophy or art will progress (Adorno 1973b [1966]). Adorno thinks that extraordinary effort is required to grasp the current contradictions in our concepts and practices, and he is not confident that we can mobilize ourselves to move past them. He sees no justification for the hope that a more positive era of human history will replace the present stage of monopoly capitalism. At the dawn of the Enlightenment, art gained autonomy and became a tool for progress. Now, we risk losing it altogether. We can only hope that some art can do us the service of taking "refuge in its own negation, hoping to survive through its death" (Adorno 1997: 338). Art's impact is ephemeral. Yet, by resisting expectations, a few artworks might still make the occasional fleeting assault on conventionality, thereby reminding us that we are not bound to our inherited ideas and alienating values. By developing aesthetics appropriately, some philosophers may equip audiences to grasp this message.

Music as the paradigm art

Much of Adorno's philosophical writing is devoted to explaining how genuine art differs from its many debased forms. For this purpose, he repeatedly discusses the work of major composers in the Western tradition. Why are these writings of

interest to anyone but musicologists and philosophers of music? The reason is that music, especially the Western tradition of "pure" instrumental music, employs and develops artistic materials and structures that do not distract us with graphic representation. Heidegger's most important analysis of art and its origins focuses on the architecture of an unnamed Greek temple, the pictorial content of a painting by Vincent van Gogh and a poem by C. F. Meyer (Heidegger 2002 [1950]). From Adorno's perspective, Heidegger's examples obscure the extent to which artistic truth content is disclosed by purely formal decisions. Great music reveals that "Musical forms … are internalizations of social forms" (Adorno 1976: 221). By explaining how music can "do nothing else but represent, in its own structure, the social antinomies," Adorno hopes to reveal how the formal dimensions of the other arts are, likewise, mimetic displays of prevailing social antinomies (Adorno 1976: 70).

Musicality is important to Adorno because it requires a willingness to grapple with a concrete particular without subsuming it under fixed categories and concepts (Adorno 1976: 179). As a temporal art, music is uniquely capable of using its own "inner historicity" to mirror and address a fleeting moment, which he regards as a core aesthetic impulse (Adorno 2002: 144). As pure form, music "is concealed beneath the surface of the sound" (Adorno 1981: 145). By analogy, the actual artwork is concealed in other art media, too. Finally, music is central because it was the first art form to generate autonomous works that exist only for the sake of direct engagement with artistic materials. Musical innovation requires an individual to confront sociohistorical forces directly, without the cover of discursive speech. However, musical innovation can fail. At one extreme, Stravinsky's later music is empty historicism. At the other, John Cage's reliance on "pure chance" highlights sound without offering historical clues (Adorno 2002: 658). Post-Schoenberg, the way forward is unclear.

The regression of music listening is a paradigm of music's (and thus art's) loss of autonomy. Adorno crystallizes his position in a 1938 essay, "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening" (Adorno 2002: 288–317). Prior to its capitulation to capitalism, music always had genuine use value. Musical autonomy then arose in such recent bourgeois practices as the home recital and listening with undivided attention in the concert hall. This autonomy was short-lived. The gradual commoditization of all objects and social practices led to sweeping reification in which every dimension of music was assigned a price. Exchange value now supersedes other values. The upper classes no longer take pleasure from music. They take pleasure in their ability to afford a private box at the opera. The working class also purchases its musical experiences, but its situation is worse. Its options are so dependent on whatever is commercially available that it makes little difference whether the radio is set to popular or classical music. Today, hearing a Beethoven symphony is like watching a Hollywood sequel. The culture industry succeeds by packaging and selling material that is accessible and familiar (or, better yet, accessible because familiar). The classical music repertoire is reduced to musical fragments that people recognize but do not enjoy as music. Consumers purchase celebrity, not art (Horkheimer and Adorno 2007). In examples that postdate Adorno, "The Three Tenors" encourage millions of people to buy Puccini arias, but these consumers gain no more from the purchase than do people who buy a perfume because it is

associated with some other celebrity. Meanwhile, for popular musicians, an appearance on the program *MTV Cribs* will sell far more "product" than a host of positive reviews. In the same way that music is the paradigm of autonomous art, the pervasive reification of music into a commodity with exchange value is Adorno's paradigm of the degradation of culture in administered societies.

The culture industry

Adorno's extended engagement with mass art is likely to be his most important legacy. His aesthetic theory and his attack on mass culture are intertwined. He attacks mass-produced culture as a repressive co-optation of the Enlightenment tradition of autonomous art. This position is virtually unintelligible to supporters of capitalism and modern political systems.

Adorno's critique originates in his early attacks on "jazz" and other popular music (Adorno 2002), reaches maturity in his book with Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and then takes its final form in the late essay "Culture Industry Reconsidered" (Adorno 1975 [1963]). Adorno's controlling thesis is that capitalism facilitates consumption by standardizing the underlying structures of all commodities. Cultural production is no exception. No jazz fan would confuse a detective novel with a John Coltrane recording. Nonetheless, "The structure and meaning of these forms show an amazing parallelism, even when they appear to have little in common on the surface" (Adorno 1991b: 160). In each case, a veneer of pseudo-individualization is laid over a standardized structure. Its static regularity neutralizes the surface innovations. For example, where others praise jazz as modern music akin to modern painting, Adorno warns that its syncopated rhythms and rehearsed "improvisations" hide the formal regularity of its stock elements and underlying, controlling pulse (Adorno 1976: 31). Upon examination, jazz offers no progress in musical thinking. It is just another repackaging and rebranding of the same old stuff. Two decades later, "How to Look at Television" develops a parallel critique (Adorno 1991b: 158–77).

Adorno's attack on the culture industry seems overly sweeping unless it is read in relation to his insistence on the particularity of form. To the extent that a cultural product's form is predictable and conventional, it fails to invite a critique of its sociohistorical inheritance. For Adorno, "the value of a thought is measured by its distance from the continuity of the familiar" (Adorno 2006: 80). It is self-defeating for the culture industry to pursue genuinely radical form. It would cost them their audience. Therefore mass art cannot pursue the cognitive value of authentic art. It does no good to respond to Adorno that some popular forms – blues music or hip-hop that is not yet co-opted into the dominant culture – provide oppressed subcultures with valuable tools of resistance. For Adorno, tools that allow people to cope with the status quo should not be praised, for they do nothing to reduce alienation. Furthermore, nothing is gained from cultural products that facilitate subcultural identity. Artistic truth content addresses individuals as individuals. Out-group homogeneity is no better than any other mode of social homogeneity.

Superficial critics dismiss Adorno as hostile to popular culture because he distrusts the masses and so privileges high art. This reading is undercut by his most famous

aphorism, "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (Adorno 1981: 34). Fine art and the intellectual class receive their own withering criticisms. The Nazi death camps were not an exceptional event. They are merely the overt manifestations of our prevailing social norms (Adorno 1973b: 361–63). With rare exception, such as the plays of Samuel Beckett, serious literature is no better than mass art at identifying and resisting the pervasive inhumanity of our times.

Another criticism faults Adorno for his tendency to paint broad swaths of the culture with a single brush. For example, he treats "jazz" as a synonym for popular music generally, extrapolating from the swing music of the 1930s to all twentieth-century popular music. But Charlie Parker's bebop is far more transgressive than Paul Whiteman's dance orchestra, and the films of Guy Maddin are nothing like the Hollywood films that Adorno watched in Los Angeles. Against such observations, Adorno can respond that contemporary fine art is part of the culture industry too. It merely speaks to a different segment of the culture. Suppose it is the case that a jazz musician or filmmaker employs a structure that secures truth content. (John Coltrane's marathon improvisations on pop tunes such as "My Favorite Things" might qualify.) Why do these count as important counterexamples? The mere presence of artistic truth content is useless unless the audience has the philosophical perspective to grasp it. Today, virtually everyone has superficial listening and viewing habits that neutralize any formal achievement. The culture industry will further neutralize it by selling it as a "classic," voiding any requirement to respond to its particularity (Adorno 1993b). Finally, there is the obvious objection that people can be educated through "entertainment" that pursues serious themes, such as the novel (and later film) *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the film *Schindler's List*. Adorno repeatedly addresses this objection. Progressive content does not facilitate a progressive function, because "discursive" and "haranguing" artworks do not transform consciousness (Adorno 1997: 242–43). To make the horrors of fascism and war *consumable*, as in 1960s protest music directed against the Vietnam War, is to veil their horrors and thus to make them tolerable. The concessions employed to attract an audience neutralize the message, and the passivity of consumption absolves consumers of any need to achieve the personal internalization required in any meaningful critique.

Assessment

Many readers find Adorno's philosophy of art to be off-putting in both presentation and content. He is a pessimist who sees the worst tendencies of modernism in seemingly innocent leisure pastimes. Given the negatives, his work is likely to remain underappreciated. Yet a writer can hardly be regarded as underappreciated unless he is worth reading. So, is he?

Adorno's continuing importance lies in four areas. First, his aesthetic theory serves as a self-conscious culmination of the German tradition that begins with Kant. Second, he approaches aesthetic theory as inseparable from cultural theory. Third, he is like Nietzsche in making philosophy of music central to his work. Consequently, he is also like Nietzsche in attracting readers who would otherwise ignore philosophy of art. Most tellingly, many of Adorno's themes resonate with contemporary

musicologists. Fourth, Adorno's philosophy of art constantly circles back to a handful of issues that interest many nonphilosophers: How is it that a single encounter with a piece of instrumental music or a story by Franz Kafka can be a life-changing event? What justifies the special significance that we assign to avant-garde art? Why should society support artistic creativity? Why should we resist the (literal) marketplace for ideas and art? Is it still possible to do so through art?

While I suspect that nonphilosophers admire Adorno for arguing that art is an antidote to alienation, the philosophical mainstream finds it easy to reject his thinking as too Hegelian or Marxist or Freudian. In his own defense, Adorno argues that philosophy offers no first truths for establishing competing theories. He is best appreciated by readers who are sympathetic to his methodology of immanent criticism, involving a freewheeling exploration of clusters of ideas in light of their own socio-historical framework. Legitimate criticisms arise from engagement with, and development of, the ideas employed. From this perspective, Adorno cannot have expected his views to stand as the final word on modern art and culture. At the same time, a twenty-first-century culture industry that has morphed its mobile telephones into platforms for games and other entertainment, all the while tracking our movements, is more insidious than anything Adorno imagines. Yet it conforms to the cultural logic he discovers in the fox trot and in television programming.

See also Kant (Chapter 5), Hegel (Chapter 6), Nietzsche (Chapter 8), Heidegger (Chapter 12), Benjamin (Chapter 15), Postmodernism (Chapter 17), Art and knowledge (Chapter 37), High art versus low art (Chapter 46).

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15
BENJAMIN

Martin Donougho

Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) was a German philosopher, literary/cultural critic and essayist whose reputation has only grown since his early death by suicide. The disparate influences on his thinking include Plato, Kant, Nietzsche, German Romanticism, Jewish mysticism, Marxism and surrealism. Benjamin's importance as critic, philosopher of art and pioneering media theorist is now universally recognized. Such recognition was belated however. Only after T. W. Adorno's 1955 publication of selections from his work did Benjamin become known to a wider public (see Benjamin 1955). Following decades of commentary, in several languages, supplemented by a scholarly *Gesammelte Schriften* (1972) – from which were excerpted four volumes of *Selected Writings* (1996–2003) – his place in the intellectual firmament of our time is assured. Yet his thought is notorious for its obscurity, stemming from a certain density of expression, the fragmentary nature of even the published works and the extreme, often inconsistent positions he was drawn to in what he once called, in a 1934 letter to Adorno's wife Gretel, "the economy of my existence" (Benjamin 2008b: 105). More than with most thinkers, his life and works are inseparable; his critical essays respond to times of crisis, and must be read in that light.

A more immediate problem of interpretation, however, lies in gauging how far Benjamin should be considered an aesthetic theorist at all. At various times he took art to be subsidiary to theological, philosophical, historical and political concerns, while by the 1930s he had come to think art at an end, its "aura" of authentic value now atrophied or just ideological illusion. The ambiguity of his utterances may be seen in their diverse reception. He was brought to the attention of the anglophone world by the 1968 publication of *Illuminations*, a volume of essays edited by Hannah Arendt, who knew Benjamin in Paris (it was supplemented in 1978 by a second volume, *Reflections*; Benjamin 1978). Implicitly – and openly in her introduction – Arendt labeled Benjamin a literary critic and "poetic thinker," so taking issue with perspectives that would view him as primarily a philosopher (Adorno), a metaphysician of messianic bent (Scholem) or a political theorist whose engagement with historical materialism was (in Terry Eagleton's words) more than "a contingent peccadillo or tolerable eccentricity" (Eagleton 1981: xii). Recent work by Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben has even given a postmodern twist to his thoughts on violence and on "sovereignty," although Benjamin remains the quintessential advocate of "the modern."

It is not just Benjamin's legacy that is ambiguous: in his own lifetime he was different things to different friends and correspondents. The bewildering array of sources he drew on – from Kant to surrealism (even newspapers) – makes it especially difficult to characterize his thinking. Benjamin was a collector of both objects and quotations (he compares his quotations to wayside robbers relieving leisurely strollers of their convictions: *SW* 1: 481, see Benjamin 1996–2003). He refused to follow any fashion or *Fach* (discipline). It is no surprise that his intended *Habilitationsschrift* (postdoctoral dissertation) on baroque tragic drama (*Trauerspiel*) was rejected as incomprehensible by the faculties of both philosophical aesthetics and German literature at the University of Frankfurt, or that Adorno – the one most directly inspired by his ideas – could speak of "a philosophy directed against philosophy" (Adorno 1967: 235). Benjamin's preferred method of "immanent criticism" – theoretical principles were to emerge from the material or work under study – was really no method at all. There are, nevertheless, certain motifs running through his writings, which can be roughly sorted into two phases. The first phase – more metaphysical or theological – extends as far as his *Trauerspiel* book. A second – more political and materialist in orientation – runs from 1924 almost to the end of his life, and includes the enormous and unfinished *Passagenwerk*. Several hundred pages of the latter were published by Rolf Tiedemann in his scholarly edition (1982), translated as *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin 1999) – so called after the glass-roofed passages constructed in early nineteenth-century Paris. The two phases overlap, it is true. The earlier concern with language and with the messianic potential of history returns in the 1930s, notably in his final theses "On the Concept of History" (Löwy 2005: 4–5).

Life

Walter Bendix Schoenflies Benjamin was born in Berlin on 15 July 1892, eldest of three children in an assimilated Jewish family. While attending a progressive high school, he came under the influence of a charismatic teacher, Gustav Wyneken, whose idealistic Youth Movement Benjamin joined, publishing in its journal *Der Anfang* ("The Beginning"). In 1914 he broke with Wyneken over the latter's support for war, for which Benjamin himself was eventually ruled medically unfit. He became close friends with Gerhard (later Gershom) Scholem in 1915, sharing interests in Jewish messianism and Kantian philosophy. In 1917 he married Dora Pollak, and they had a son, Stefan. Meanwhile he pursued university studies in Freiburg, Berlin and finally Bern, where he graduated in 1919 with a thesis on "The Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism" (*SW* 1). A long essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities* won the attention and support of Hugo von Hofmannstahl. Benjamin then began work on his *Habilitations* dissertation, published later as *Origin of the German Mourning Play* (*Trauerspiel*) (see Benjamin 1977a). Its failure in 1925 to be accepted at the University of Frankfurt dashed any hopes of an academic career, an outcome buttressed by what he called his "conversion to political theory" (Benjamin 1994: 276). In 1924 while on the island of Capri writing the dissertation he had met a young Latvian revolutionary, Asja Lacis. Together with reading Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness,* this encounter helped make him a committed Marxist. His journey to

be with her in Moscow produced *Moscow Diary* (see Benjamin 1986), and she was instrumental in the writing of *One-Way Street* (1928; see Benjamin 1979), dedicated to her. Benjamin sought a costly divorce from Dora in order to marry Lacis, but nothing came of his plans.

Thanks to his Frankfurt contacts, among them the cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer, Benjamin was able to publish a series of essays in various journals, and he set out to fashion himself into "the foremost critic of German literature," as he put it in a 1930 letter to Scholem, whom he always addressed as "Gerhard" (Benjamin 1994: 359). Through Lacis he had in 1929 met Bertolt Brecht, with whom Benjamin was to work closely, writing essays on Brechtian "epic theater" (see Benjamin 1973b). With Franz Hessel (a model for "Jules" of the book and film *Jules et Jim*) he translated two volumes of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. This was an unstable period in Germany, and Scholem – becoming known as a great scholar of Jewish mysticism – continually urged him to emigrate to Palestine, something he toyed with for years. In March 1933, with the political situation worsening, Benjamin left Germany never to return. By October he was in Paris, resuming the enormously ambitious *Arcades Project*, often taking notes in his beloved Bibliothèque Nationale (his librarian friend Georges Bataille kept these safe through the war). Always in straitened circumstances, Benjamin came to rely financially on the Institute for Social Research, now relocated to New York and headed by Max Horkheimer. Remarkable essays – on Flaubert, Kafka and most famously "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" – come from this period. After the Nazis revoked his German citizenship in 1939 he was detained for some months by the French authorities, which served to aggravate a heart condition. In 1940 he fled Paris for Lourdes, then traveled to Marseilles to pick up the visa finally secured for him. Finding the border with Spain closed, Benjamin joined a small party of refugees escaping on foot over the mountains (see Lisa Fittko's eyewitness account in Benjamin 1999: 946–54), but they were detained by Spanish border guards. Weakened and in despair Benjamin took an overdose of morphine, his death recorded as occurring at 10 p.m., 26 September 1940. He is buried in the cemetery at Port Bou.

Ideas

Given the range, depth and complexity of Benjamin's thinking, this brief entry must be selective, with a particular focus on one work, the familiar if controversial essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (Benjamin 2008a; second version, *SW* 3; third, *SW* 4) (in the second rather than the abbreviated familiar version, translated from the French, which featured in *Illuminations*). It shares with his address "The Author as Producer" (1934, in *SW* 2) an activist turn of thought stemming from his association with Brecht. Its heuristic format, in a series of "theses" about historical "tendencies," aims at changing the world, to recall Marx's challenge to philosophy to do more than interpret, and it adopts his materialist faith that humanity sets itself only those tasks it can solve. Moreover, it intervenes in a charged political situation, when fascist propaganda and exploitation of mass media (radio, film, popular art) seemed a direct threat to humanity. Yet the terms of

Benjamin's polemic can only be understood in the light of his overall intellectual history. The essay both extends his concerns and puts them to the test. The following remarks take up three themes: first, the centrality of "experience" even to technological process; second, the role played by art and aesthetics; and last, his conception of history.

Experience

From the start Benjamin invoked a thick sense of experience (*Erfahrung*) as something we must *pass through* (*fahren* is "to go," as *per* means "through"), in and through time, recollecting one's past – something more complex than subjective, momentary, "lived" experience (*Erlebnis*). "Experience" would prove central to his entire philosophy. His early essays opposed the Neo-Kantians' reduction of experience to empirical consciousness (and conversely their separation of principles from sensible intuition), as well as their dogmatic refusal to allow the suprasensible as a legitimate philosophical theme. The challenge for Benjamin was how to meld *experience* and conceptual *knowledge* of experience, rendering each continuous with and immanent in the other. (Goethe was an inspiration here, and Benjamin cites him to the effect that "all fact is really theory"; see Benjamin 1994: 313.) Initially he supposed that metaphysics could mimetically capture the divine power of creative naming, so redeeming ordinary human experience. Soon abandoning any hope that philosophy alone could meet the challenge, he turned instead to art and literature – at least, art as completed by a criticism that would reveal the form or "idea" animating individual work. Even there his conception of art and criticism would undergo change. Along with his political conversion in the mid-twenties, Benjamin encountered various modernist aesthetic practices and new media such as radio, photography and film. With *One-Way Street* he even tried a more avant-garde presentation of his ideas. He chanced upon the productions of the surrealists, whose play upon contingent juxtapositions of objects and investigation of dream logic could produce what he labels "a profane illumination" of the ordinary world (*SW* 2: 209). The essay "Marseilles" (1929) carries an epigraph from André Breton that might apply to much of Benjamin's thought: "The street … the only valid field of experience" (*SW* 2: 232).

"The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" issues a challenge even to this broader conception of *Erfahrung*. It asks what happens to individual and collective experience under transformed conditions of perception. In particular, what follows when cultural artifacts become not just replicated for popular consumption but also in themselves reproducible – copies without originals, or at least, where the original loses authority? The process began with lithography, Benjamin claims, but took off with photography and then sound recording (though he says little on the effect of the latter). Technological (as opposed to handcrafted) reproducibility ushers in a new era in the existence of works of art and culture. The photographic image lacks a unique existence "here and now"; it is no longer "authentic" (*echt*), and lacks the historical authority derived from a tradition. Enlargements, close-ups or (with film) slow motion and montage of shots reveal things inaccessible to an ordinary perception – an "optical unconscious" (*SW* 3: 117); and images can be viewed or

heard anywhere, not just in church, palace or auditorium. (We might extend Benjamin's argument to recent techniques such as color slides or PowerPoint, which fundamentally alter the way we think about paintings or sculpture, for example, even more than book illustrations had served to shrink the way we conceive of the "original"; similarly LP and audiotape changed the very way music is performed and performances interpreted, digital technology even more so.) Moreover, conditions of reception are not so much private or individual (in gallery or live performance, say) as collective, for the masses (as in mass media).

Benjamin sums up the result by saying that what withers in technological reproducibility is the work's "aura." The change is irreversible; tradition is shattered. But what actually *is* the "aura"? Benjamin asks, echoing his earlier essay, "A Little History of Photography" (1931, in *SW* 2). He answers:

> A strange weave [*Gespinst*] of space and time: the unique appearance [*Erscheinung*] of a distance, however near it may be. To follow with the eye – while resting on a summer afternoon – a mountain range on the horizon or a branch that casts its shadow on the beholder is to breathe the aura of those mountains, of that branch.
>
> (*SW* 3: 105; translation modified)

Note the relational nature of this experience, akin to Kant's reflective judgment of taste, neither determining an object nor merely subjective in scope; our act of apprehension is not empirical but something unique, singular, almost mystical. One "breathes" the aura or air: the notion goes back to ancient medical beliefs, perhaps even to biblical metaphors of divine "breath" or to suspect theosophist musings of which a Marxist might be wary (Brecht found his friend's "mysticism, in a stance against mysticism … quite dreadful" – Brecht 1993: 10; translation modified).

How to approach such an odd creature as "aura"? And does Benjamin lament or celebrate its decline? He ties uniqueness to ritual, not just as original "magic" but also in later instances such as a Renaissance "cult" of beauty, early nineteenth-century "art for art's sake" – a "theology of art" – or still later in the "negative theology" of aestheticist purism (Mallarmé). Yet no less than the aura discernible in early photography (the bourgeois cult of commemorative albums), these are deemed wholly outmoded. The photography of Eugène Atget or August Sander helped free the medium from a "parasitic dependence" on ritual, declares Benjamin. Reception of the artwork no longer invokes "cult value" (*Kultwert*): it depends instead on "exhibition" or "presentation" value (*Ausstellungswert*), that is, reproducibility for multiple venues and occasions.

The aura has withered once and for all and can persist only as inauthentic auratic effects, or what he came to term "phantasmagoria" (the mere semblance typical of fetishized commodities and entertainment). Is that to say that sacred images did exist at one time but are (alas) no longer? Or is it rather that there never was an original, our modern gaze having seen through all such idolatry? Is Benjamin prey to the Romantic delusion that there really was an era of authenticity – as some allege – or is his point precisely the opposite: originality is an artifact of conditions of reproducibility? From the text (or even context) it is hard to tell. Nor is it clear whether or how

far Benjamin later withdrew from the radical position staked out (if hypothetically) in the "Artwork" essay, to endorse at least partially the return of auratic experience (see below).

On the other side of the ledger, Benjamin suggests that besides freeing us from cultic practices film has the potential to "train" our perceptual capacities for coping with the dizziness of modern life: "The most important social function of film is to establish equilibrium between human beings and the apparatus" (*SW* 3: 117). Benjamin writes of two technologies – a magical, auratic technology of "beautiful semblance" (*Schein*), and one of play and experiment (*SW* 3: 127–28). The first sought to master nature, the second aims at "interplay" between humanity and nature, so as to accustom our sensorium to dealing with modern technology (*SW* 3: 107). Accordingly, what is lost with the decline of the aura is more than compensated for by the vast scope for play (*Spiel-Raum*) that film affords. Rather than individual absorption, it induces an attitude of "distraction" (*Zerstreuung*) through which the masses might remain open to new experiences and stimuli.

To the objection that this renders cinematic experience mindlessly passive, two replies might be made. First, Benjamin indicates the primacy of a "tactile" reception, as against optical perception, of habit rather than attention. The *haptic/optic* dyad is due to the art historian Alois Riegl ("haptic" comes from the Greek for "to attach," as with the ornaments Riegl studied). Benjamin follows him also in allowing that the two modes may work in tandem, optical understanding springing from tacit feeling (thus unlike the binary oppositions dominating most of the essay). It is a gradual process of adaptation and, as architecture shows, also an ancient one. The mass audience feels its way unconsciously through the shocks of film, in the same way that we feel our way through a building without necessarily articulating what it means. Even so, it may seem that just coping with the shocks of modern urban existence is a modest goal; something worthier than habits of *distraction* ought to follow the *destruction* of art. Miriam Hansen has recently sought to restore some complexity to the "play" of film experience; Benjamin's term "innervation" – an active mimetic adaptation, more than a Freudian screen or defense – might be applied to avert the "anaesthetics" of mere spectacle (Hansen 2012: 132–47).

From talk about tactile awareness Benjamin cuts abruptly to his final section, issuing its apocalyptic challenge. Fascism aestheticizes politics as war, which boils down to the attempt to dominate nature through technology: "*Communism replies by politicizing art*" (*SW* 3: 122). The whole thing invited Adorno's censure: he rejoined that Benjamin had overestimated the emancipatory potential of mass media while ignoring the critical function of "autonomous" (or "high") art. In retrospect the piece might appear prescient yet at the same time overtaken by events – by the technology both of war and of mass media.

Critique of art and aesthetics

Overlapping Benjamin's concern for integral experience is his attitude to art and aesthetics, an attitude that was consistently ambivalent. On the one hand, even at his most political he still refers to "the work" and to "art." On the other, he enunciates

what could be called an "antiaesthetics," wishing to liquidate traditional concepts such as creativity, genius, aesthetic taste, artistic autonomy, organic unity (and classical symbol) and any special, unique or individual aesthetic experience, together with aesthetics as a discipline under Kantian aegis – all in the name of a humanity pitted against dark forces of reaction.

Benjamin's attitude did fluctuate, however. Rainer Rochlitz discerns three phases (Rochlitz 1996: 47–48): an early emphasis on the literary "sublime" (1914–25), the political or activist phase (1925–35), and a final attempt at retrieving something positive even in disenchanted modernity. Benjamin's first major engagement with art comes with the 1919 thesis on Romantic "criticism" (*Kritik*); significant inasmuch as early German Romanticism is the origin of modern notions about art. To Fichte's reliance on the absolute *I* Benjamin prefers Friedrich Schlegel's resort to infinite *reflection*, a thinking without limit. His own principle of "immanent criticism" (theoretical principles emerge from the material itself) owes much to Romantic *Kritik*. Yet his reservations emerge as the essay proceeds. Criticism "mortifies" the work, as he later put it, to reveal its prosaic core. Benjamin rejects the Romantics' fixation on irony, form and the infinite idea at the expense of import or content (*Gehalt*) and the particular *work* of art. If this qualifies as an aesthetics of the sublime, it is so in virtue of its emphasis on disunity or discordance, and the interpreter's failure to condense experience into a classical "beautiful semblance" (*schöner Schein*).

Immanent criticism found immediate application in the brilliant 1922 essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities*. Here Benjamin argues that art offers no more than an image or "semblance" of human unity with the divine, hence a measure of hope; it cannot itself "create," as Romantics supposed. He takes the falling star briefly mentioned near the end of Goethe's novella (but which the characters themselves don't see) as a symbol of such hope, and famously concludes: "Only for the sake of the hopeless have we been given hope" (*SW* 1: 356). So long as artistic semblance does not take on a mythic life of its own, art has the power to point beyond itself. Criticism shatters the work into "the torso of a symbol" (*SW* 1: 340); symbol becomes allegory, in short. Ambivalence towards art is found also in the work that crowns Benjamin's early career, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1924–25). Here too allegory takes center stage (Benjamin was a pioneer in rehabilitating the form). Allegory mirrors the finitude of a world without fate, bereft of the wholeness of Greek tragedy, and it prefigures a modernity now understood as secularized, mortified history. Here we glimpse "the secret smugglers' path" (Benjamin 1968: 150) from esoteric past (baroque *Trauerspiel*) to present-day concerns (disenchantment, reification). More especially, the book distances itself from any allegiance to artistic wholeness and an aesthetics of the symbol: the art of theater, critically understood, points to a truth beyond itself.

After his political, indeed, aesthetic conversion in the mid-twenties, Benjamin came to see the critic as "strategist in the literary battle" – to cite the first of his thirteen theses on "the critic's technique" in *One-Way Street* (*SW* 1: 460). Art is understood not as autonomous but strategically, and not directly in relation to class struggle but with respect to techniques applied in literary production, Brecht's "epic theater" being exemplary of such baring of conventions. We have observed the delicate game Benjamin plays in his "Artwork" essay (1935–36): shunning auratic presence while making room for a possible interplay between human sensorium and

technology. But what about the last phase and the putative return of auratic experience? In "The Storyteller" (1936), devoted to the art of Nikolai Leskov, Benjamin examines what happens to oral narrative when literary technology replaces traditional craft. As with photography, the craftsman's touch and trace seem to vanish. Yet the essay is presumably not in nostalgic mode; rather it suggests how the haptic, ornamental quality of craftwork might combine with modern technology without resort to ideological magic.

More complex is the path taken in Benjamin's ultimate project, the intended book called "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century." The recent turn to visual culture and media studies has made the *Arcades Project* seem prescient in its attention to images, architecture, cityscape, fashion, popular culture and journalism. Yet its procedure remains more imaginative art than social science. A collage of quotations – "citing without quotation marks" (Benjamin 1999: 458) – assumes the function immanent criticism had previously performed. One of several social types figuring in its pages is the flâneur, sauntering through the dusty arcades of a city understood as the commodified lifeworld, a forest of "phantasmagoria" and illusion. Prodded by Horkheimer at the Institute for Social Research, Benjamin proposed making Baudelaire more central than in earlier formulations. "Aura" here makes an equivocal return. "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939) reads the poet as trying to extract coherent experience from the momentary shocks of modern life, to recover memory from isolated consciousness for which the past has atrophied. His lyric persona – playing the flâneur-hero exposed to deadly forces, swallowed up in the crowd, intoxicated by phantasmagorical spectacle – must wrest poetry from the ruins. "To experience the aura of a phenomenon means to endow [*belehnen*] it with the capacity of returning the gaze" (Benjamin 1973a: 148; 2006: 204; translation modified). Baudelaire's poetry displays and enacts the perceived loss of this capacity, the aura disintegrating before our eyes; it is presented, paradoxically, within art itself (Rochlitz 1996: 218–19; but see Yacavone 2012: 110–11). Benjamin's formal procedure in the *Arcades Project* remains controversial however. Adorno criticized it as too reductively materialist, at the intersection of "magic and positivism" – a bewitched place (Benjamin 1977b: 129, 136).

Messianic history

Benjamin's last word and testament is "On the Concept of History," though he never considered it ready for publication, as a moving letter written in April/May 1940 to Gretel Adorno reveals (Benjamin 2008b: 287). It comprises eighteen runic fragments shored against a time of acute crisis (Hitler–Stalin pact, Nazi occupation of Poland). Meaning and context are more than usually controversial, as Benjamin seems to revisit his youthful messianism to invoke a "now-time" which would blast through the continuum of linear, homogeneous progress (a conception of time typifying historicists of all stripes). Echoing Nietzsche, Thesis VII reads: "There is no document of culture that is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (*SW* 4: 392). History must be "brushed against the nap," so as to recover the primal history (*Urgeschichte*) of humanity. The letter to Gretel Adorno draws her attention to

Thesis XVII as revealing the hidden continuity with his previous work: it speaks of a messianic standstill, when history shines like a monad through era, lifework and individual work (and by extension Benjamin's own efforts). What remains constant throughout his life is his resolute anti-historicism, a commitment to rescuing – of doing justice to and activating – an abandoned past in the name of the future. Hope is for the past, not the future; it is for those who can no longer hope (Friedlander 2012: 194). Benjamin is a pessimist rather than a utopian (Löwy 2005: 9–11): he wishes momentarily to avert catastrophe, to awaken us from the nightmare of capitalism as usual. Like Friedrich Schlegel's historian, or the angel in his own beloved Klee watercolor *Angelus Novus* cited in Thesis IX (and now in Jerusalem), Benjamin was a prophet looking backwards.

Considering that his work was almost forgotten, it is astonishing how high Benjamin's star has risen. And for someone who supposed that original meaning lay in future recovery, the "afterlife" of his own works has proved to be both prolific and contested, a continuing rediscovery, in several academic fields and beyond the academy. There are two novels and at least two feature documentaries on his life and death, as well as a formidable opera *Shadowtime* (2004) by the British composer Brian Ferneyhough with libretto by the poet Charles Bernstein.

See also Kant (Chapter 5), Hegel (Chapter 6), Nietzsche (Chapter 8), Phenomenology (Chapter 13), Adorno (Chapter 14), Postmodernism (Chapter 17).

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16
FOUCAULT

Robert Wicks

Michel Foucault's (1926–84) intellectual brilliance was nobly tempered with a good proportion of modesty. In a 1984 interview, he stated that he was not a great author. In 1982, he mentioned that he was not capable of talking extensively about music, and in 1980 he admitted that he did not know anything about the aesthetics of motion pictures. In 1975, he described his interest in literature as only a matter of passing theoretical interest, and in 1971 he acknowledged that he was not a specialist in painting (Foucault 1988: 53, 307; 1998: 241, 233; 2009: 27).

Foucault's widespread academic influence notwithstanding, the above remarks quietly raise the question of whether artistic themes play a significant role in his *oeuvre*. To date, many studies of Foucault have bypassed his reflections on art, and have concentrated upon his discussions of how axiomatic, yet mostly tacit, assumptions about the nature of knowledge – assumptions that appear to vary noticeably over time – can determine effectively a society's modes of inquiry, its institutional structures and its prevailing conceptions of appropriate behavior. This established understanding of Foucault's intellectual contribution locates his thought at the interface of a variety of realms which include, not particularly aesthetic theory, but sociology, history, politics, linguistics, psychology and philosophy. Foucault's writings, though, are punctuated continually with reflections on art, and these are not merely stylistic embellishments; they can be understood quite directly to inform the trajectory of his philosophical development.

Perhaps one of the most reliable summations of Foucault's general outlook comes from Foucault himself, in a pseudonymously authored entry for a philosophical dictionary that he wrote under the name of "Maurice Florence" in the early 1980s (Foucault 1998: 459–63). The entry explains how his intellectual project is to reveal the historically variable social assumptions that mold people into various lifestyles, both as these forces tend to determine the basic attitudes of a social organization, and as they tend to prescribe for people an assortment of general self-conceptions. Foucault regards these historical forces – ones that operate through a diversity of institutional practices and linguistic styles – as so powerful that they can establish what counts as legitimate "knowledge" for an entire epoch, often to the exclusion and oppression of alternative ways of understanding the world. He notes how his intellectual project resembles that of Immanuel Kant: just as Kant described how human nature, when conceived of as an ingrained mode of rational organization,

determines the shape of human experience in general, Foucault describes how, given the probable absence of any universal human nature, historical contexts themselves operate to determine limiting and limited conceptions of knowledge, self and world.

A good portion of Foucault's work reveals how what presents itself frequently in everyday life as being natural, universal and unchangeable is in fact the product of specific social practices relative to a certain place and time. By exposing the mechanisms of these social constructions – ones that typically, and with powerful subtlety, can impose intolerant attitudes which marginalize underprivileged sectors of the population – Foucault's thought embodies liberating values. Contrary to monolithic styles of understanding, he comprehends the world in a more tolerant, multifaceted and perspectival manner, due in a large part to the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche. Foucault's reflections on the importance of art, in light of his concern for openmindedness and expanded horizons, should not therefore be underestimated: they mesh with his interest in discerning the underlying intellectual shapes of particular historical contexts, his interest in securing liberation from oppressive social fabrications, and his interest in increasing the possibilities for people to exercise a more artistic control over their lives, for the purpose of creating for themselves a more satisfying and healthy personal lifestyle.

The discussions of artistic themes in Foucault's writings cluster around three ideas: first, that works of art can reveal the intellectual temperament particular to a specific historical epoch, either as a whole or in a major part; second, that works of art can bring our existing conceptions of personhood into serious question, and can stimulate radically new modes of awareness; and third, that the concepts of artistic style and creativity can direct how we can positively reinterpret the person, or subject of experience. The third idea aligns with the last phase of Foucault's thought; the first two are more pronounced in his earlier works.

Artistic expressions of the intellectual temperament of an epoch

Velázquez's Las Meninas

The first chapter of one of Foucault's best-known works of the 1960s, *Les Mots et les choses* (*The Order of Things*) (Foucault 1973) – a historical-sociological philosophical study of European modes of knowledge from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries – offers a memorable analysis of Diego Velázquez's 1656 masterpiece, *Las Meninas*. Segments from this chapter are perhaps the most often-cited portions of Foucault's writings on visual art, and he makes a daring claim: this painting's compositional structure displays quintessentially the mode of representation that dominated the thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or what he describes as the classical age.

Foucault observes that a relatively detached and abstractive standpoint emerged in Europe during the 1600s, which, in its mappings and orderings of things in a more conventional language, tried to isolate quantifiable and mechanically predictable relationships among objects. An "objective" apprehension of things was believed to result, if one could detach from consideration all of one's personal expectations, projections and subjective affections within the situation under consideration. In the field of science, this temperament resulted in a quest for, and the major discovery of,

natural laws; in the field of aesthetics, it led to theories of aesthetic appreciation that emphasized how a "disinterested" attitude is necessary for the most unbiased understanding and apprehension of natural and artistic beauty, as we find in British empiricist and Kantian aesthetics.

According to Foucault, Velázquez's *Las Meninas* displays a subtle and paradoxical aspect of the neutral classical outlook: this way of regarding the world does not allow the observer to include itself simultaneously as another object to be observed neutrally. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault elaborately describes Velázquez's painting to explain how its composition illustrates the situation of an observer who, when self-consciously trying to capture his or her own reflection (as when a scientist exclusively studies the brain in an effort to study the mind, for instance), necessarily fails to represent himself or herself in its capacity as an active center of awareness.

In *Las Meninas* "representation undertakes to represent itself here in all its elements," but it involves "the necessary disappearance of that which is its foundation – the person it resembles and the person in whose eyes it is only a resemblance" (Foucault 1973: 16). The painting exemplifies this idea by containing only the twice-removed reflections of the people who are both the implied observers of the painting and the implied subjects of the painting, namely King Philip IV and Queen Mariana Teresa, neither of whom are explicitly in the painting, but who are assumed to be standing outside of it as its viewers. The significance of their absence among the actual personages portrayed in the work is conspicuous since the painting's very subject is Velázquez's act of depicting Philip and Mariana. When these royal personages viewed *Las Meninas* in actual life, the only perceivable representations of themselves which they had before them in the painting were a relatively vague, reflected image of Velázquez's own painted image of them in a distant mirror, and the physical counterpart of themselves in the person of their five-year-old daughter, Margaretha Maria Teresa.

During the twentieth century, and some decades before Foucault wrote *The Order of Things*, Jean-Paul Sartre analyzed this kind of asymmetry between observer and observed and expanded it into a general account of human consciousness in *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre 1956). As it appears in Western philosophical literature, the core idea extends at least as far back as Immanuel Kant, who stated in his *Critique of Pure Reason* that "I have no knowledge of myself as I am but merely as I appear to myself" (Kant 1965: 169).

Had Foucault examined *Las Meninas* in a more art-historically oriented way, he would have appreciated that the work substantially contains Renaissance and modern, as well as classical, features and might consequently have hesitated to present it as the epitome of the classical outlook. The painting was done in 1656 – the same year of the Hôpital Général's establishment in Paris, which was the leading image of the classical period in Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* – so Foucault presumably believed that the two examples were complementary. Madrid, however, was a less enlightened city than Paris, still steeped in medieval values, with supreme artists such as Velázquez, for instance, still being taxed as manual laborers. As a testimony to Velázquez's artistic vision nonetheless, *Las Meninas* embodies the distinctively modern qualities of multiple-interpretability and a destabilized position of the viewer which confirm it as a painting far ahead of its time.

Magritte's This Is Not a Pipe

Just as Foucault regards Velázquez's *Las Meninas* as illustrative of basic principles that define the intellectual temperament of the classical period, he discusses the surrealist paintings of René Magritte as indicators of the general mentality typical of Western cultural thinking during the twentieth century. According to Foucault, two principles have ruled Western painting from the fifteenth to the end of the nineteenth century: first, words and images have usually been kept distinct, and when they have been both present in the same painting, one of these has tended to be subordinated to the other in artistic importance; and second, whenever a painted image resembled an object in the world, the image usually served to direct the viewer's attention outside the painting to that object's presence in the world. Words tended to be subordinated to images within paintings, and painted images themselves tended to be subordinated to the actual objects they represented.

Foucault argues that Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (*This Is Not a Pipe*) of 1926 is structured in a manner that controverts both these assumptions (Foucault 1983). The painting contains a realistic and straightforwardly rendered image of a pipe, but it includes the painted sentence, "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," in large letters directly below the pipe's image. In passing, Foucault notes that within this sentence, the word *Ceci* ("This") is ambiguous – it could refer to the image of the pipe, or to the sentence "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," or to the entire painting – and he concludes that the painting is intrinsically ambiguous and resists any singular and exclusive interpretation. This capacity for multiple interpretations is also a key feature Foucault assigns to twentieth-century art.

Foucault further asserts that Magritte's painting disrupts the traditional expectation that either the image or the text constitutes the painting's primary message. Rather, he notes that the total composition generates an interpretive oscillation between word and image, much like the experience of perceiving a calligram (an image constructed with the shapes of words whose meanings themselves refer to the kind of object represented by the image). It is also comparable to the experience of perceiving an ambiguous geometrical configuration that stimulates perspective-switches in the viewer, such as the Necker cube. In multiply interpretable imagery of this kind, none of the projected points of view is given precedence.

Magritte's compositions depart also from the second feature of the fifteenth- through nineteenth-century Western attitude towards words and images I have mentioned, namely the assumption that realistically rendered images refer the viewer naturally to the corresponding objects in the world. In Magritte's own words, his paintings, despite their realistic style, are "farthest from *trompe-l'œil*" (Foucault 1983: 43). Magritte intends no deception, and no reinforcement of the relation, or of any assumed priority, between image and object. In this way, his work questions philosophically the traditional conception that words and images refer primarily to actual objects and events. Foucault, in his discussions of Magritte's work, appears to see expressed artistically in the paintings he considers, a general view of meaning which closely approximates that of the linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure: the idea that the meaning of a word is established primarily by the semantic network of associated words within which it operates linguistically, as opposed to an initially clear, unambiguous and independent reference to some specifiable object in the world.

Foucault interprets the imagery in Magritte's paintings as relatively self-enclosed, as essentially self-referent, and as displaying the dissolution of static hierarchies and meanings that are derived from things which straightforwardly present themselves in experience. When, in the perception of a painting such as *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, a person's interpretive focus shifts from image to word, and from word to image, back and forth continuously, this experience of shifting from one interpretation to another becomes literally the key point to which Foucault aims to draw his reader's attention. Although this point of interpretive transition has no substance of its own – it is a non-entity – the entire dynamism of the ambiguous presentation depends upon this point. He writes, "[Magritte's] incisions that drew figures and those that marked letters communicate only by void, the non-place hidden beneath marble solidity" (Foucault 1983: 41).

Jacques Derrida's notion of *différence* bears close affinities to Foucault's analysis of Magritte's surrealist painting insofar as Derrida emphasizes the centrality of transitional and differentiating points within the field of linguistic phenomena (Derrida 1978b). Also, Jean Baudrillard's notions of "simulacra" and "hyperreality" are foreshadowed by Foucault's analysis of Magritte. The self-contained and self-referential aspect of the imagery that Foucault emphasizes within his interpretation of Magritte's paintings anticipates Baudrillard's thought that contemporary representations convey the impression that they are "always already reproduced" (Baudrillard 1988: 146).

Foucault's multi-aspected analysis of Magritte's surrealism coincides with the spirit of the 1960s and 1970s post-structuralist intellectual times during which it was written. He reveals, however, that the principles heralded during those decades as distinctly post-structuralist and postmodern were already culturally operative during the 1920s. In this respect, Foucault differs from theorists such as Jean-François Lyotard, who identifies the idea of multifacetedness as a distinctly postmodern phenomenon (Lyotard 1984).

Borges's Chinese encyclopedia excerpt

Foucault does not limit his examples of historically exemplary works of art to the visual arts. His early reference to Francisco Goya's well-known etching, *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos* (*The Sleep of Reason Brings Forth Monsters*) in the conclusion of *Histoire de la folie* (*Madness and Civilization*, Foucault 1965), and his later, more extensive discussion of Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, are complemented by an acknowledgment of Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* – a literary work which, for Foucault, expresses the transition between the Renaissance and classical intellectual temperaments (Foucault 1973: 49). Additionally, and with great significance, he regards the work of yet another figure within the Spanish-speaking tradition, Jorge Luis Borges, as embodying the contemporary principles referred to in connection with Magritte. Employing one of Borges's passages as almost a microcosmic description of the contemporary world scene, Foucault prefaces *The Order of Things* with a brief discussion of a passage from Borges's short story, "The Analytic Language of John Wilkins." The story mentions a

> "certain Chinese encyclopedia" in which it is written that "animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs,

> (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies."
>
> (Foucault 1973: xv)

The categories of this encyclopedia, in sharp distinction to the standard practice of formulating clearly partitioned categories of classification (as in biological taxonomy), are sometimes overlapping in scope, sometimes incongruous with each other with respect to their meanings, and sometimes contrary to typical ways of classifying animals. As a whole, they operate without, and defy the postulation of, any underlying conceptual space in relation to which they can be organized into a coherent scheme. The kind of array here is nonetheless not altogether unfamiliar: it expands the more elemental, double-aspected style of incongruity characteristic of Magritte's painting into a multisided incongruity, and it displays what Foucault recognizes as a general principle of the twentieth-century mentality. It is that the world invites characterization and understanding in a multifaceted way which can run contrary to logically grounded and scientifically interested styles of classification. In its nineteenth-century bud, Foucault apprehended this outlook in the paintings of Edouard Manet, whom he believed made possible "all the painting after Impressionism, … [and] all the painting of the twentieth century … from which, in fact contemporary art developed" (Foucault 2009: 28).

There are two important upshots of Foucault's discussion of works of art as exemplars of historical principles. The first is his observation that, as noted, it has been during the entire twentieth century, and not simply during the 1960s and later, that the field of human experience has been perceived as multifaceted, many communitied and filled with incommensurabilities. Many cubist paintings, as well as numerous examples from the futurist, surrealist and Dadaist movements, display this multidimensional awareness in the history of art; in literary theory, Mikhail Bakhtin's conception of "heteroglossia" exhibits this tendency as well.

The second upshot of Foucault's discussion concerns his broader interest in drawing our attention to the limits of any given perspective. Those of a traditional mind might find Magritte's paintings to be confusing, and could very likely regard the Chinese encyclopedia as only lightheartedly comical, or, if taken seriously, intellectually indigestible. Yet the very experience of conceptual disorientation that such artistic constructions can generate underscores an important way in which they can reveal the limitations of logically structured thinking of an Aristotelian sort, and pave the way for a more conceptually prismatic outlook.

Art at the borders of language and self

Ecstatic awareness and the dissolution of the subject

If the underlying principles that govern either a society or a person are dissolved, then the stability and enduring integrity of that society or person will be disrupted. Such upheavals occurred, for Foucault, during the transition from the Renaissance

to the classical period, and from the classical to the modern period. With regard to the changes in an individual's perspective, a comparable metamorphosis occurs when a person, upon casting into serious doubt the assumptions which had previously governed his or her life, suffers deep disillusionment, and soon, as a "new person," regards her or his previous views as relatively benighted. G. W. F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, for example, extensively describes this phenomenon at a variety of social and individual levels (Hegel 1979).

Foucault believes that language very strongly determines the contours of human consciousness. He is also convinced that a person's sense of "self" is largely a reformable social construction. So when the assumptions governing a person's life-perspective are cast into radical doubt, the kind of personal "death" that follows is thought to generate an apprehension of the person's previously existing linguistic limits and an attempt to express the new experience in a new language. In his discussions of literature, Foucault often refers to authors who apparently succeeded in reaching these borders, and who, by entering new modes of consciousness and attaining a more comprehensive sense of self, developed alternative forms of speaking and writing.

Foucault discerns such linguistic advances in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Dialogues*, which issue "from a surge of language that breaks forth from having encountered an obscure barrier" (Foucault 1998: 33), in the writings of the Marquis de Sade, which show "just how far speech may advance upon the sands of silence" (Foucault 1998: 70), and in the work of Raymond Roussel, Antonin Artaud, Georges Bataille, Pierre Klossowski and Maurice Blanchot. He characterizes these writers as having embodied extreme and transgressive forms of language, often in association with a confrontation with death or the experience of intense sexuality.

Such explorers of literary space establish their importance in how they quest, not for a totally comprehensive vision of the world that can be systematically articulated, but for an awareness – as Foucault himself searched for in his own life and work – of the areas where limitations exist, or of those exact points where transgression can take place. This kind of sensitivity leads to writing, and experiencing, at the edge of nothingness, at the edge of death and at the edge of scandal, the result of which is often literature with a violent erotic content and a disconcerting language of terror. Writing under such conditions can take the entrenched language "as far away from itself as possible" (Foucault 1998: 149). Foucault finds in general that these writers are oriented towards "the void toward which and from which we speak" (ibid.: 89) and he hails them as visionaries and as literary revolutionaries whose words have the power to break through existing patterns of entrenched and habituated modes of world interpretation.

Foucault believes that at the very limit of this project of trying to take language as far away from itself as possible, the writer must place herself or himself at an extreme personal distance, such as to exclude as much as possible her or his presence in the writing. Language, as it is in itself, will then supposedly appear, untainted by "subjectivity" – a mode of being present in one's writing that usually carries with it the habitual adherence to ready-made meanings, combined with a drive for systematicity which inevitably results in being too reflective. Once the writer's presence is removed from the writing, then language will present itself in its purity, and its limits will be perceivable. Speaking about the unspeakable will then become possible.

This kind of ecstatic self-removal is apprehended distinctly by Foucault in Maurice Blanchot's writing. He also perceives it in Georges Bataille's imagery of the eye which is upturned and rolled back in either ecstasy or sheer horror, or both. It marks the point where writers ought to aim – the point where one reaches the borders of one's consciousness, faces the void and is poised for a breakthrough in awareness. In short, Foucault continually celebrates writers who live on the edge, and he considers how their experience-at-the-limit tends to be embodied linguistically. A question which issues from these considerations is whether it is reasonable to require some criteria through which one can distinguish the genuinely illuminating breakthroughs in awareness from the merely offensive, outrageous or fantastic modes. Foucault's overall attitude is to be open-minded and tolerant of transgressive attitudes in general, since he questions seriously whether absolute truth can ever be specified in a once-and-for-all fashion.

The concept of "authorship" and the dissolution of the subject

In connection with the ideal of eliminating the writer's presence within the meaning of what is written, Foucault reflects upon the nature of artworks, upon their interpretation and upon writing itself. He develops these themes in his essay, "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" ("What Is an Author?") (Foucault 1998) and observes initially that questions of assigning proper authorship, determining degrees of authenticity, prescribing copyrights and delineating which items are to be included in the set of an author's "complete works" are all relatively recent phenomena, and do not determine an exclusive or necessary way to regard literature and artworks in general. As is the case for many of Foucault's analyses, he maintains that the concept of an "author" is largely a historical fabrication and is always subject to further questioning, revision and even dissolution.

In line with his analysis of Magritte's painting, Foucault regards contemporary literature as grounded upon the assumption that it is "an interplay of signs arranged less according to its signified content than according to the very nature of the signifier" – an interplay of signs within "which the writing subject constantly disappears" and that refers "only to itself, but without being restricted to the confines of its interiority" (Foucault 1998: 206). This is to say, as might be expected, that he defines contemporary writing in a manner consistent with Saussure's theory of meaning: written words refer primarily neither to objects in the world nor to the author who wrote them, but to other words. Sometimes, as the words illuminate their linguistic position within the interconnected network of language, they, like a stick of dynamite, can introduce instability and cause a transformation of that existing network.

Foucault's view in "What Is an Author?" has the effect of dissolving the sharp borders and definitive aesthetic functions of concepts such as "author" and "work" – a point he reiterated in the first chapter of *L'Archéologie du savoir* (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1972 [1969]), which was published in the same year. He does not regard what has been written as the literal verbal expression of an author's psychological states, and he denies that the assemblages of words which a person of letters composes can be assumed to organize themselves clearly and automatically into that person's "works." With regard to the question, for instance, of what counts among Friedrich Nietzsche's works, Foucault notes that it remains

perpetually unclear whether a short laundry list should be included. This point was reiterated by Jacques Derrida in *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* (Derrida 1978a).

Given the thematic contents of his works in general, Foucault maintains unsurprisingly that the socially constructed idea of "an author" is an "ideological product" through which "one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition and recomposition of fiction" (Foucault 1998: 221). He also supports the position set forth a year earlier by Roland Barthes in the essay, "The Death of the Author" (Barthes 1977: 142–48), namely that the concept of the author ought to be minimized, because it carries with it a fundamentally authoritarian and oppressive conception of literary criticism. Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche 1966) reverberates here into the realm of contemporary literary criticism, where it transforms itself into a critique of monologue-centered conceptions of literature. Foucault himself anticipates the "death of the author" simply as a matter of cultural change, and echoing his famous last lines of *The Order of Things* – "one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea" (Foucault 1973: 387) – he states correspondingly that "at the very moment when [our society] is in the process of changing, the author function will disappear" (Foucault 1998: 222).

Foucault's and Barthes's joint questioning of the author's authority led to significant developments in literary theory in the decades that followed, especially in reference to "reader-oriented" approaches to criticism advanced by theorists such as Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish.

Foucault's "aesthetics of existence"

Foucault's important discussions of "power" – the very propellers of his many specific sociological analyses – emphasize both the oppressive dimensions of power and its creative ones. In the former instances, power operates as a dominating or repressive force from which liberation would be a reasonable goal; in the latter, power constitutes those productive energies which themselves work to liberate a person from existing social constraints. During his final years, Foucault attended more closely to the positive aspects of power, considering especially how power can be directed towards a kind of "self-creation" or "art of life." In one late interview, he queried, "But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life?" (Foucault 1997: 261).

Foucault describes his approach to understanding life artistically as an "aesthetics of existence" – an inquiry which he informs by examining the history of various "arts of existence" or "techniques of the self." These include practices that were cultivated by the members of classical Greek and Roman aristocracy, such as shaping one's body through proper exercise and diet, reflecting upon one's modes of world interpretation and adjusting with temperance one's basic rules of social conduct.

Considering Nietzsche's deep influence on Foucault, it is not surprising that the phrase "aesthetics of existence" can be traced back to Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche 1967), which develops an "aesthetic justification of existence" – a fundamental attitude towards life which issues from the assumption that "life is

something amoral" (ibid.: §5). Foucault's view of artistic self-formation also reflects Nietzsche's method of giving style to one's character by highlighting attractive features while concealing unattractive ones (Nietzsche 1974: 232) – a method that itself verbally reiterates Plotinus's remarkably similar recipe for making oneself into a more beautiful character, using the model of how a sculptor artistically transforms the shape of a material block to make a beautiful statue (Plotinus 1966: 259).

A more recent ancestor to Foucault's aesthetics of existence is Albert Camus, who, in his *The Myth of Sisyphus*, acknowledged a "primitive hostility of the world" and maintained that "the present and the succession of presents before a constantly conscious soul is the ideal of the absurd person" (1955: 47). The noble way to be, for Camus, is to appreciate fully and endlessly the sheer fact of being alive. Foucault transforms these Nietzschean and Camusian aesthetic mentalities into a more practice- and body-centered approach, and he considers how to form one's life "into an oeuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria" (Foucault 1990: 10–11). He emphasizes artistic self-sculpting, in contrast to experiencing simply the intrinsic quality of the existing moment in general, or sensually savoring the constantly changing display of given aesthetic stimuli, such as the glint of sunlight playing upon the surface of the ocean.

Foucault's "aesthetics of existence" – an extended meditation which, more accurately, addresses the "art of living" – is among the most controversial segments of his reflections on artistic themes, and it has been confronted with the same objections that have been leveled against Nietzsche and Camus: giving precedence to aesthetic, artistic or stylistic criteria over moral criteria within the direction of one's life can easily involve the sacrifice of traditional sensibilities regarding what is right and wrong. In Foucault's defense, it should be recognized immediately that artistic and moral criteria are compatible, since it is possible to do the right thing with style. A more crucial problem concerns whether, or when, criteria related to artistic style should override moral criteria in deciding how to behave.

One way to understand this tension is in reference to difficulties that arise for artists in general. This concerns the degree of creative and expressive freedoms that belongs legitimately to an artist, as these freedoms stand in potential conflict with moral responsibilities that can issue from the very fact of any person's active membership in a social community. In general, Foucault's writings call into question the constraints imposed by any given social organization, and his reflections on aesthetics cohere with the revolutionary and adventurous sentiment he displayed throughout his life. Foucault's aesthetics does indeed harbor a sense in which traditional morality is challenged, and in this respect, he remained sympathetic with Nietzsche until the very end.

See also Hegel (Chapter 6), Nietzsche (Chapter 8), Phenomenology (Chapter 13), Postmodernism (Chapter 17), Interpretation (Chapter 30).

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17
POSTMODERNISM
Barthes and Derrida

David Novitz

A brief history

What we have come only very recently to think of as philosophical postmodernism is the final, perhaps the most intemperate, stage of a long reaction to the central doctrines of Enlightenment thought. Modern philosophy, and with it the contemporary idea of the natural sciences, hence the idea of modernity itself, stems from the thought of the Enlightenment (Habermas 1987: Lecture I). This is why one cannot properly understand the ideas that constitute *postmodernism* unless one also understands the central tenets of Enlightenment philosophy. And in order to understand this, one has to try to understand how European history and European philosophy come together in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One has to think of the dreadful power of kings and of the medieval and Renaissance church, and one has to try to remember (and imagine) what life was like in a feudal world where the aristocracy had the power of life and death over most people and where the church could consign the unfaithful not just to persecution and misery on earth, but to eternal damnation. This was a society, based on rigid metaphysical and epistemological beliefs: the Earth was the center of the universe, blessed by God, who not only empowered kings, bishops and popes, but who afforded them privileged sources of knowledge not available to ordinary minds, all of which could be challenged only on threat of pains too great to comprehend.

It gradually transpired – first with Copernicus's challenge to Ptolemy and later on with Galileo – that the heavens themselves refused to obey the received version of God's will. The Earth, far from being the center of the universe, was not even the center of the local planetary system. Astronomy seemed to show that the divine plan, whatever it was, was much bigger, much more diffuse, and much less concerned with "God's Earth" and "God's creatures" than the church would ever be willing to concede.

Hence, by the time of the sixteenth-century Renaissance, there was a move away from an uncritical acceptance of the worldview that had been dogmatically proclaimed by the church (with alterations and emendations) for nearly 1,400 years. There was now a growing emphasis on the importance of the rational capacities of the individual, and on natural ways of coming to know and understand. Mathematics, deductive

and inductive reasoning, and empirical observation came gradually and imperceptibly to be held in greater esteem than some of the doctrines of the Christian church. Prayers, it seemed, could not move very much at all, let alone mountains; levers and fulcrums, and a growing understanding of the laws of dynamics, could and did.

The Enlightenment emphasized the rational powers of the individual: the capacity of all people to reason, in the process to discover the truth, and so to determine autonomously what was or was not morally required of them. In this way, insight, knowledge and understanding were no longer the province of a privileged few; the Enlightenment emphasis on a shared human nature had effectively democratized rationality, knowledge, understanding and moral comprehension. Nor were truths hidden from us: if Hobbes and Locke are to be believed, literal language can convey these to us (Hobbes 1962: 13, 22; Locke 1961: vol. 2, 105–6), so that any ordinary human being can achieve a well-grounded understanding of the world, provided only that we use those natural ways of coming to know that are part of our shared human nature.

Truth, rationality, the possibility of natural (rather than supernatural) sources of knowledge, the capacity of individuals to understand, to decipher, to invent, discover, discern, and so judge independently of authority, were and remain the perennial themes of modern (Enlightenment) philosophy. What is now called postmodern philosophy begins with the denial of some of these themes in the late nineteenth century. The term itself, we should note, was the invention not of philosophers but of artists. According to Charles Jencks, its earliest appearance "extends to the 1870s when it was used by the British artist, James Watkins Chapman" (cited in Appignanese and Garrett 1998: 3). But it was a term that was used by philosophers only as a result of the growing influence in America of French post-structuralists or deconstructionists like Derrida, Lyotard and Baudrillard. Even so, there can be no doubt that the tendency in human thought marked by the term "postmodernism" predates the first appearance of this term among philosophers.

Typically, philosophical postmodernism is critical of the idea that the truth is attainable, if by that is meant that it is possible to determine and so come to know how things really are, in and of themselves, by using our natural faculties. Since one cannot have unmediated access to things themselves, to brute facts, language is not constrained by an extralinguistic world; rather "the play of signs" creatively constructs what we mistakenly believe to be a world of brute reality. Thus we find in the work of Jacques Derrida a well-known attack on both the "metaphysics of presence" and the "myth of logocentrism": on the ideas, that is, that reality itself, real objects, real meanings can be directly present to us, and on the idea that these presences constrain the way in which people use language (Derrida 1974: 49ff.).

Postmodernism is critical, too, of the idea that there is or could be an unconstructed human nature that is shared by all human beings and that affords them the capacity to be rational. Far from being a natural endowment, rationality is seen as historically and culturally constructed. Indeed, appeals to reason and rationality, far from being an appeal to some neutral, widely shared arbiter of human practices and judgments, is the product of the common human desire to control others (Nietzsche 1987; Foucault 1989; Rabinow 1984: 3–29), and has nothing at all to do with a naturally ordained and enlightening human capacity.

For the postmodernist, then, there are no foundational truths, no sets of privileged, rationally unassailable propositions, on which our insights and understandings are based. The individual, rather, is historically and socially constituted, and his or her thought processes and understandings are the products of a historical process of which the individual is usually unaware but which is strongly formative and entirely ineliminable (Margolis 1998: 353–55). On this view, then, there can be no neutral, culturally unmediated standpoint from which to view and understand the nature of reality; nor can our natural faculties afford us that unbiased insight into the nature of things that modernism had promised.

The motivation for postmodernism comes from two seemingly different sources. The first is an emphasis on and almost sentimental yearning for community, coupled with a marked hostility to the emphasis placed by Enlightenment philosophy on the natural powers and the autonomy of the individual. This celebration of the individual, coupled with the glorification in liberal thought of the freedom of the individual to satisfy his or her desires, meets with strong initial resistance in the work of G. F. W. Hegel (1956), who mourns the fragmentation of community – especially the loss of what he calls an ethical or an organic community – all brought about, so he thinks, by Enlightenment philosophy. On his view, the individual depends for his well-being and for his particular abilities on a historically shaped community, so that, if one follows an Hegelian line of thought, one would be loath to maintain that the individual has historically and culturally unconstituted faculties or capacities that enable him or her to create or to discern the truth.

A second source of postmodernism is found in an excessive emphasis on the individual rather than on community or history or culture: but in this case on creative powers of the individual. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, who was the first full-blown philosophical postmodernist, there are no known truths. In an early essay, he defends the view that all of what we designate as knowledge is a construct of the fanciful imagination: it is all metaphor, simile and illusion (Nietzsche 1911). The trouble, though, is that we have an interest in forgetting the origins of our knowledge of the world, and we use words like "true" and "rational" to disguise the fact that the various propositions to which we assent and beliefs that we have are no more than a figment of the imagination.

We do so, Nietzsche insists, because we have *an interest* in so doing: it helps cement our values, our security and our power in the world. "Only by forgetting that primitive world of metaphors," Nietzsche writes, "only by the congelation and coagulation of an original mass of similes and percepts pouring forth as a fiery liquid out of the primal faculty of human fancy … does [man] live with some repose, safety and consequence" (Nietzsche 1911: 184).

Although we forget its origins in the imagination, all our knowledge is bred of metaphor (or the imagination), and, in a famous passage, truth is described as nothing more than "a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphism … [which] after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions" (Nietzsche 1911: 180).

So, flying in the face of Enlightenment thought, the mature Nietzsche rejected absolute notions of reason, knowledge and morality. These he saw as the "idols" of his time: man-made and worshiped by all who wished to be properly a part of

society. For him they are idolized because they reflect our deep needs. Talking of works of art, he says "the beautiful and the ugly are recognized as *relative* to our most fundamental values of preservation. It is senseless to want to posit anything as beautiful or ugly apart from this" (Nietzsche 1987: §804). This, it will scarcely surprise you, is how he treats all evaluation, intellectual, religious and moral. As a result he thinks that there are no absolute facts, no truth, objective values, rationality and knowledge; what we regard as such is so regarded relative to our own interests, and relative to the perspectives on the world that these interests create.

Postmodernism and philosophy of art

The conflict between the core ideas of modernism and postmodernism underlies many of the more hotly contested issues in contemporary philosophy of art. First, with regard to the theory of interpretation, postmodernists argue that there is and can be no such thing as a true interpretation, while many who are influenced by the central tenets of philosophical modernism argue that any interpretation is either true or false, and that for any work of art there is and must be a single true interpretation. Second, while modernists are of the view that a work of art can be genuinely good, and that it can have intrinsic formal properties that make it so (Bell 1961: 19–46), postmodernists see artistic merit as a function of contingent historical and cultural circumstance, and argue that what makes a work of art "good" or "beautiful" is not a set of intrinsic features of the work, but the historically derived values and conventions that contingently characterize a particular period of a culture. Third, whereas modernists tend to the view that art exists independently of particular cultures and times, and in fact transcends them, so that there are intrinsic art-making features, hence clear boundaries, that distinguish art from life, postmodernism has inclined some philosophers to be more circumspect about these claims. Such philosophers are of the view that there are no intrinsic features that distinguish art from nonart, or high art from popular art; instead they are inclined to argue that art is a cultural or a social rather than a natural phenomenon, so that the identification of art, high art or popular art and their properties does not depend on the presence in a particular artifact of some set of stable, publicly available features. It depends rather on an acquaintance with a certain history and culture, the conventions, traditions and values of that culture, and a grasp of when and how they apply. It is relative to these, the postmodernist argues, that an artifact is identified as art, or as popular rather than high art.

Finally, the dispute between modernism and postmodernism reaches deeply into questions about the proper role or function of art, and the influence that art has over our thinking and understanding. Some modernists have tended to the view that art, as a self-contained, autonomous phenomenon, is not to be appreciated in terms of its instructive functions, which, it is argued, are purely incidental to its function as art (Lamarque and Olsen 1994). Others – still modernists – argue that art may properly be considered as instructive, indeed that its cognitive content is integral to its value as art (Novitz 1992: ch. 4; Gaut 1998) but that its powers of instruction are limited by considerations of reason and truth (Novitz 1992: ch. 10). As against this,

contemporary postmodernists have argued (either directly or by implication) that art in particular, and human cultural products in general, shape human cognition in ways that make it impossible to reach beyond the dominant narratives, texts, discourses, "vocabularies" (Rorty 1989: chs 1 and 2) or paradigms (Kuhn 1970), that mold our thought and our understanding in order to ascertain their truth and so determine their adequacy. On this view, what counts as truth, what counts as "fitting the facts" and what counts as "adequate" is itself culturally determined by the narratives, "idioms" or "vocabularies" that, for contingent historical reasons, have come to dominate in our society.

From this it is clear that debates concerning the perennial problems of the philosophy of art – problems to do with the identification of art, its interpretation, evaluation and cognitive content; problems as well about our perception of artworks, and the ways in which works of art exist – all take shape around the divide between philosophical modernism and postmodernism. Even so, it would be wrong to think that all philosophers of art fall neatly into the modernist or postmodernist camp. The two positions represent extremes at either end of a continuum. While it is true, for instance, that analytic aestheticians subscribe to many of the tenets of modernism, it is also the case that many analytic aestheticians are critical of some aspects of modernist thought in its application to art, and deny, for instance, that art is a natural human phenomenon that can be identified independently of cultural practice (Carroll 1993; Novitz 1998), or that there are intrinsic features of artworks – formal, affective or functional properties – that mark the distinction between high and popular art.

The interpretation and evaluation debate

The idea that there are comparatively stable meanings that inhere in a work of art – or at least in some works of art – is the overriding assumption that governs the modernist claim that interpretations can be true and can be known to be true. On this view, there is a single right interpretation for any work of art that has a design or a meaning (Beardsley 1970; Davies 1988, 1995; Novitz 1987: ch. 6; Stecker 1997: ch. 7). The postmodernist critique of this idea finds some of its impetus in the deconstructive turn of continental philosophy, exemplified initially in Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1974) and anticipated in Roland Barthes's *S/Z* (1974).

Derrida's now famous attack on the "metaphysics of presence" and "logocentrism" led to the view that there were no extratextual or extralinguistic facts that could be apprehended directly and which could therefore serve to constrain the sense that could properly be derived from any "system of signs": any utterance, text or painting. On this view, there is nothing beyond the sign that we can speak of and that can be directly known to us. All we have are systems of signs, where each sign gets its meaning contextually through its relation to other signs. Since there is no extratextual reality that can tell us how signs are properly to be used and related to one another, and since there is nothing "out there" to be referred to and consulted in this matter, all that we have is the "play of signs," a constant shifting and reconfiguration of the relations of signs and words to one another, with resultant shifts in meaning and understanding. For any seemingly obvious reading that privileges certain construals

over others, it is always possible, Derrida contends, to "reverse the hierarchy" (Derrida 1977: 254), to destabilize through argument and so to deconstruct the ways in which signs and concepts are traditionally related to each other. In this way, by adopting an approach that is strongly reminiscent of Nietzsche, he allows that it is always possible to construct and discern other meanings, and in the process offer different but perhaps equally plausible interpretations.

Clearly, on this view the aim of interpretation is not to unlock some or other meaning that "lies hidden in the text" (Beardsley 1970). On the contrary, if the postmodern view is adopted, there is no stable meaning that is there to be discovered; there is, rather, an ongoing "play" of meaning that can be stabilized only through artifice: by subscribing, that is, to the favored modernist narrative of reason, determinate ascertainable meaning and literal truth. But this, we are assured, is only one among many discourses or narratives, and to favor it above others is entirely arbitrary, more a function of historical accident than of any way the world is (Rorty 1989).

A similar view is advanced by Roland Barthes. On his view, "the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text" (Barthes 1974: 4); it is to make the reader more active, less passive: more, Barthes suggests, like the writer, so that there is a clear sense on Barthes's view in which such a "writerly" reading or interpretation helps create the meanings that are found in the work. The resultant "methodological field" of active creation on the part of the reader, Barthes calls the "Text" (ibid.: 74); and it consists of a ludic or playful response that destabilizes the reader's ordinary beliefs about language. A "writerly" – as opposed to a "readerly" – interpretation involves the playful, unconstrained restructuring of our ordinary linguistic beliefs, premised always on the belief that language is itself an infinite network of significations, without a stable foundation on which our understanding of it is to be based. On this view, there is no point in asking whether a given (writerly) interpretation is adequate to the text or to the work. Indeed, what Barthes calls the "Text" (with a capital "T") is itself "a methodological field" created by such a "writerly" response.

It plainly is difficult to know how a "readerly" interpretation, which seeks to be adequate to the text, can be reconciled with a "writerly" reading, which gives to the reader the freedom to create meanings in ways that we would normally associate with the poet. Writing, for Barthes, is a deeply creative activity, one that is thought of by him as characteristically human since it allows us to rebel against and to change "the intelligible unities" – the categories of thought – that dominate within a speech community at a given time, and to produce alternative ways of thinking and describing. Although Barthes certainly believes that "readerly" interpretation has a place in literary criticism, this, he seems to think, is so only because of inherited conventional practices and structures that have no more authority than a "writerly" restructuring of prevailing categories of thought.

The view that readers help complete a work by imputing properties to it has entered deeply into the debate about interpretation in the Anglo-American tradition. Joseph Margolis (1974) insists, for instance, that there is no one true interpretation of a work: that since works of art are "culturally emergent" entities, and since the cultural myths in terms of which we interpret works of art impart to them the very properties that we "discover" within them, there is no culturally neutral way of

discovering the properties of a work of art in terms of which we adjudge them true. Hence, he contends that the common insistence that there is or must be one true interpretation of a work of art is simply wrongheaded, for this is not an area in which a bivalent logic properly applies. There are many plausible interpretations, Margolis contends, which exclude one another, but there is no neutral way of deciding between them. Hence to subject interpretations of art to the law of the excluded middle does violence to the very notion of art, for works of art, on this view, are always culturally constituted and so inherently unstable, depending on variable cultural practices for the properties that they have (Margolis 1994: chs 1–3; Krausz 1993: ch. 1).

The position is problematic. Either it succumbs to a naive cognitive relativism (something that Margolis strives to avoid), or it is guilty of a straightforward non sequitur, since it does not follow from it that the interpretation of works of art is not subject to a bivalent logic. Let me explain. If it is true, as Margolis and others insist, that works of art are physically embodied and culturally emergent entities, one can straightforwardly come to know that one's interpretation of a particular work of art is true or correct just by acquainting oneself with the cultural background against which the work and its properties emerge. Academic critics regularly do this, and do so with a considerable degree of success. This can be denied only by contending that such cultural knowledge is not really available to them – that they inevitably construe the culture of others in terms of their own location in history, so that they cannot know (and know that they know) the parameters of another culture. But such a claim leads inevitably to a cognitive relativism that is far from robust, since it seems in the end to exclude the possibility of all knowledge, and thus has the embarrassing reflexive consequences that Margolis strives to avoid.

The same sort of considerations apply to the evaluation of art. Even if postmodernists are correct in rejecting the notion of neutral, transhistorical values that attach to particular works of art, all that critics need to do in order to test their evaluation of a particular work is acquaint themselves with aspects of the relevant culture inhabited by the work, against which the properties of the work emerge. In this way, the critic will come to know what values prevailed at a particular time and in a particular culture: what would have horrified and pleased, what would have delighted and disgusted. This will not of course enable the critic to discern universal value in any particular work of art, but it will enable the critic to make true statements of the form: "This scene would have outraged an Elizabethan audience," or "This, by Classical lights, is an extremely beautiful building."

To say that the assessment of artistic value is mediated by an understanding of the culture against which the relevant work emerged is not to relativize value in a vicious way; it is to say no more than that our perception and judgment of value is always made within the bounds of certain genres or categories of art (Walton 1970). Just as a good stroke in tennis will not be a good stroke in golf, so artistic value has to be judged within certain categories, where those categories are discerned and understood only by acquainting oneself with a pertinent culture or period of that culture. To say this is not to deny that one's judgments of value may be more or less reasonable, and may even be shown to be true or correct.

To say all of this is not, of course, to decisively refute philosophical postmodernism. This is a task that I have tried to perform elsewhere (Novitz 1987: ch. 3;

1992: ch. 10). It is only to show that there are reasons for doubting the efficacy of the postmodernist move where interpretation and evaluation are concerned.

Postmodernist art

Thus far I have confined my discussion to postmodern philosophy and its impact on the philosophy of art. It needs to be observed, if only briefly, that in its original application the term "postmodernism" was used exclusively to describe certain trends in art that marked a break with what we now know as "modernist art." Reflecting on this, some commentators contend that there really is no connection between philosophical postmodernism and those trends in art that both artists and critics have described as postmodern. But there is an important connection between the two, and it is worthy of our attention.

As one might expect from its name, the artistic movement known as modernism has its origins in a growing emphasis on the worth, the autonomy and the achievements of the individual: as both the subject and the creator of art. Influenced by the philosophical doctrines of the Enlightenment, modernism tended to the view that works of art were individual, quite unique, objects of beauty created by the imaginative endeavors of highly talented individuals. The boundedness of art, its separation from life, its intrinsic artistic nature, capable always of a true explanation, and capable of carrying real values that could, and in the best cases would, survive across cultures and times, are all doctrines that are intimately related to the central thought of the Enlightenment, and all help characterize what art critics now refer to as modernism. Coupled with this is the idea of genius: that some people have outstanding natural talents, a natural brilliance, and are capable of designing, more or less from scratch, wholly unique and exceptionally valuable artifacts that are works of art. High modernism, towards the end of the nineteenth century, saw the essence of the visual and musical arts as residing in their formal properties; it was this that distinguished them from life (Bell 1961), as well as from nonartistic artifacts.

Postmodernist art begins with an assault on the modernist boundaries of art – a refusal to see art as purely formal and as distinct from life, hence a willingness to appropriate the ready-made objects of everyday living and to subsume them under the rubric of art. Hence, we can think of Dadaism as the first postmodernist art movement; and there is, of course, a well-documented history of subsequent assaults in contemporary art on the once sacred boundaries between art and life. But it can and has been shown that while the modernist boundaries imposed on art tend to distort and oversimplify the scope and complexity of our artistic endeavors, this fact does not and need not commit us to the philosophical doctrines of postmodernism (Novitz 1992). One can hold the view that modernist ideas about art and the associated practice were needlessly confined, without thereby subscribing to the epistemologies, the antimetaphysics, the theories of value, interpretation and meaning advocated by postmodernists like Derrida, Barthes, Margolis or Rorty.

See also Hegel (Chapter 6), Nietzsche (Chapter 8), Heidegger (Chapter 12), Phenomenology (Chapter 13), Aesthetic universals (Chapter 26), Value of art (Chapter 28), Interpretation (Chapter 30), Literature (Chapter 50).

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18
GOODMAN

Jenefer Robinson

Nelson Goodman's 1968 classic, *Languages of Art*, offered a powerful new vision of aesthetics grounded in analytic philosophy of language, which reframed many of the questions being asked in aesthetics and gave original, ingenious, often eccentric answers to them. At the time it was written, aesthetics was not a very lively field. Arguably the only enduring masterpiece of analytic aesthetics from this era is Monroe Beardsley's *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (1958). *Languages of Art*, like its exact contemporary, Wollheim's *Art and Its Objects* (1968), was concerned to debunk both Beardsley's Dewey-flavored empiricism and the still influential idealism of Croce and Collingwood. For Goodman artworks are symbols that refer to the world by virtue of what symbol they are in what symbol system. Like the structuralists, he claims that artworks are signifiers in systems or structures of signs. Also like the structuralists, he argues that language and art do not merely reflect an antecedently existing world but help to create new ones: "any notion of a reality consisting of objects and events and kinds established independently of discourse and unaffected by how they are described or otherwise presented must give way to the recognition that these, too, are parts of the story" (Goodman 1984: 67). On the other hand, the post-structuralist notion that meanings are constantly in flux, in accordance with the principles of *différance* and deferral of meaning, is inconsistent with Goodman's nominalism, which holds that terms genuinely refer to individuals, such as objects, events and kinds. Goodman is not a skeptic about meaning. As he once said, "Derrida deconstructs worlds, whereas I construct them!"

Broadly construed, Goodman's views have prevailed. Works of art are now commonly understood as meaningful entities, with cognitive value, which require interpretation rather than passive appreciation. But Goodman tried to defend his view in terms of a narrow semantic theory, which abstracts from the psychology of artists and audiences and from the historical context of artworks, and which is consistent with his nominalism. Given the constraints that Goodman sets for himself, it is extraordinary how much the theory manages to accomplish.

Symbol systems

Goodman reconceived works of art as symbols in symbol systems. A symbol scheme is a set of symbols or characters together with a syntax or rules of combination,

and a symbol system is simply "a symbol scheme correlated with a field of reference" (Goodman 1968: 143). A natural language is one kind of symbol system and musical notation is another.

A notational scheme is a set of characters that are (1) disjoint and (2) finitely differentiated, that is, (1) no inscription of a character can belong to more than one character, so that if the English alphabet is a notational scheme, for example, then an inscription like the following cannot both be an "a" and a "d," and (2) there must in principle be a way of telling one character from another: if, for example, every difference in the height of the stem between "a" and "d" corresponded to a difference in character, then it would be impossible to know which character any given inscription belongs to and the scheme would be *dense* – between each two characters there could be a third – and hence syntactically undifferentiated.

A notational system is a notational scheme that satisfies some further – semantic – requirements. (3) It does not permit ambiguity: no character is paired with more than one reference or "compliance" class. (4) Compliance classes are disjoint: any two characters have distinct non-overlapping compliance classes. Finally, (5) notational systems are semantically differentiated: it's always in principle possible to tell which of two compliance classes a given character refers to. By contrast, semantically *dense* systems – in which between any two compliance classes there can be a third – are such that you cannot always tell which of two compliance classes a single character refers to, because there may be no measurable difference between the two classes. These formulations are informal and omit various qualifications that Goodman makes. For more precise and accurate formulations, Goodman's own definitions in *Languages of Art* should be consulted.

The nearest thing to a notational system in the arts is the system of Western musical notation, in which each written note on the page by and large refers to one and only one musical tone and each tone is referred to by a distinct written note. (There are some exceptions: for example, on even-tempered instruments C-sharp and D-flat are everywhere intersubstitutable.) Novels, poems and plays, on the other hand, are in natural languages, symbol systems that are syntactically disjoint and differentiated, but also tolerate ambiguity and fail the requirements of semantic disjointness and differentiation. The same words can pick out many different things and the things picked out can be described in many different ways. Pictorial symbol systems are different again: they lack both syntactic and semantic disjointness and differentiation: any change in length and color of brushstroke can signify a difference in what is signified, so that it is impossible to tell which "character" a particular brushstroke belongs to. As we shall see, Goodman thinks that important aesthetic differences are due to these differences in symbol system.

Representation

One of the most criticized chapters of *Languages of Art* is the chapter on pictorial representation, or depiction. A theory of depiction is supposed to explain what it means for a picture to represent something. Following Plato, the most widely accepted theory has been that depiction is a matter of mimesis or imitation. Goodman, however,

treats representation as a semantic concept, in line with his idea that artworks are symbols in symbol systems. In his view, if a picture *P* represents an object *O*, then, providing that *O* exists or has existed, *P* denotes *O*. A picture of Winston Churchill picks him out or denotes him and in this respect functions like a proper name. On the other hand, if *O* does not exist, then to say that *P* represents *O* means that *P* is a picture of a certain kind, an *O*-representing-picture. In this case *P* does not denote *O*, but the phrase "*O*-representing-picture" denotes *P*. Similarly, a linguistic description of an object *O* either denotes *O* (if *O* exists) or is an *O*-denoting-description. Neither a picture nor a description of Santa Claus can refer to Santa Claus, because he doesn't exist; they are merely a Santa-Claus-representing-picture (a Santa-Claus-picture) and a Santa-Claus-description, respectively.

The difference between pictorial representations and linguistic descriptions resides only in the different kinds of symbol system that they are in: whereas a natural language is a syntactically disjoint and differentiated system (we can always distinguish one character from another), a pictorial symbol system is syntactically dense and undifferentiated (between every two characters there can be a third) and relatively replete (every aspect of the pictorial symbol – its colors, lines, brushwork and the like – is constitutive of it as a symbol).

Goodman's theory has been salutary in showing how simple-minded it is to think of picturing as mirroring or copying or imitating. Understanding what a picture or a description refers to is always a function of the system of symbolizing within which it functions. Just as the noun "Boot" is a boat-description in German and a boot-description in English, so a portrait might be an ordinary-woman-picture in a cubist symbol system and a grotesque-woman-with-a-serious-eye-deformity-picture in the symbol system of late nineteenth-century academicism. Goodman's view is also salutary in that it emphasizes the need to understand pictures, just as we have to understand language, and that understanding pictures requires mastery of their pictorial "language." Finally, Goodman is also right to point out that a realistic picture cannot be defined as one that imitates the world particularly closely or accurately. After all, there are no fixed criteria for realism: a wide variety of pictorial styles count as "realistic" from van Eyck to Courbet.

But there are many problems. One of the main complaints has been that Goodman ignores what artists and spectators have to do psychologically or perceptually in order to grasp what a picture depicts. Spectators are not merely classifying pictures as two-little-girl-pictures or unicorn-pictures, or figuring out what a picture refers to (Gainsborough's daughters or nothing); they are seeing two little girls or a unicorn in the picture (Wollheim 1968) or they are imagining of their seeing a picture that it is a case of seeing two little girls or a unicorn (Walton 1990). We understand pictures by (imagining) seeing things in them, not by decoding them.

Now, it is certainly true that Goodman does not speak explicitly about the perceptual abilities that understanding pictures requires, yet it is also true that he points out how the task of deciphering pictures is a task of discriminating characters in a system that is syntactically and semantically dense and relatively replete. Pictures cannot be "read" since reading is necessarily in a language; pictures require acts of perceptual discrimination. Goodman's theory here, as elsewhere, is abstract and schematic. He gets us to rethink such basic aesthetic concepts as representation

without spelling out all the implications of his view. After all, there is no inherent contradiction in believing both that representation should be analyzed in terms of reference and that representation requires seeing-in (or some such perceptual ability). Gainsborough's picture of his daughters refers to his daughters. How it does this is by getting us to see the daughters in the picture. Likewise a picture of a unicorn is a unicorn-picture, but how we classify it is by seeing a unicorn in the picture. Perceptual theories of representation can be seen as filling in the gaps of Goodman's very schematic account.

On the other hand, the *perceptual* theorists of representation have the advantage in that they treat representation as a univocal concept: if a picture represents a so-and-so, we (in imagination) see a so-and-so in the picture, whether or not the picture refers to an actual so-and-so. However, because a nonexistent object cannot be referred to, a picture that "represents a so-and-so" is always ambiguous for Goodman between being a so-and-so-picture and denoting a so-and-so. It is true that Gainsborough's portrait of his daughters picks them out or refers to them, whereas another picture of two little girls does not refer to anybody, but it does not follow that "representing" or "describing" are ambiguous terms. It is just that sometimes a representation or a description is satisfied and sometimes it is not. The sense in which the picture represents the daughters seems to be exactly the same as the sense in which it represents two little girls. Here is one of many instances where Goodman's frugal semantics leads him to counterintuitive conclusions.

Goodman has also been criticized for ignoring the important perceptual constraints on realism. For Goodman, realism in painting is a matter of the familiarity of the symbol system within which the picture is made. Yet however familiar some symbol systems become (such as the system of Analytical Cubism), they still do not become realistic for us unless they permit us to see readily in a picture what it represents. On this issue, too, the perceptual theorists seem to come out ahead.

Finally, Goodman's concept of representation ignores the historical context in which a picture originates. Goodman argues that "the characteristics and functions of symbols … can be studied quite apart from the acts or beliefs or motives of any agent that may have brought about the … referential … relationships involved" (Goodman 1984: 88). However, the very same picture in the same pictorial symbol system may be a quite different kind of picture, depending on how and why it came into being. For example, Wollheim cites a Terborch painting commonly known as *The Parental Admonition*, which, he says, in fact depicts an aspirant prostitute and her potential client. The picture can be interpreted in either way; a correct interpretation depends upon knowing about the genesis of the painting in the painter's intentions.

Exemplification

Like representation, Goodman treats exemplification and expression as semantic concepts. By contrast with the reams of pages devoted to Goodman on representation, the concept of exemplification has been relatively neglected, yet Goodman regarded it as one of the main important innovations in *Languages of Art*. Exemplification is that form of reference in which a symbol refers to a label that denotes it. In other

words, an exemplified property is one that is both possessed and referred to by a symbol. Goodman's example is the tailor's swatch, which possesses properties of color, texture, size and shape, but exemplifies (symbolizes) only color and texture, not size and shape. By analogy with the tailor's swatch, artworks exemplify the properties that they both possess and refer to: a work of art *A* exemplifies a predicate *F* if and only if *F* denotes *A* and *A* refers to *F*.

Goodman is famously a nominalist, who rejects the reality of abstract entities such as properties. This means that, like Quine, he denies that we can quantify over abstract entities such as classes or properties because he thinks that this inevitably leads to logical paradoxes. Because he refuses to countenance talk of properties, Goodman says that what the tailor's swatch exemplifies are labels, such as "yellow" and "tweedy," rather than properties of yellowness and tweediness. There is some dispute about whether Goodman's views about expression, representation and so on require a nominalist interpretation. I suspect not. At any rate, I shall continue the common practice of substituting talk of properties for talk of labels, in the interest of perspicacity.

As in the case of representation, the concept of exemplification, though much vilified, has important virtues. First, it elegantly captures the way in which many artworks reveal, show forth or "embody" the very themes and qualities that they are about. Munch's well-known painting, *The Scream*, for example, exemplifies its swirling shapes, lurid colors, dramatic contrasts and powerful brushwork. Similarly, Shakespeare's "Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore / So do our minutes hasten to their end" exemplifies the advance and retreat of the waves in line one and the headlong rush of time in line two. The lines exemplify the very qualities to which they refer: thus Goodman makes sense out of the oft-made claim that works of art *show* what they *say*.

Second, the concept of exemplification is particularly useful in explaining how abstract arts like non-objective painting and so-called "pure" instrumental music can be meaningful, despite the fact that they do not normally represent anything and cannot describe anything, because they are not in a linguistic symbol system. We might say, for example, that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony exemplifies a "struggle to victory." A heroic theme meets obstacles in the form of other themes, key changes and the like, which try to alter it and prevent its return, yet the theme manages to survive unscathed, thereby exemplifying a triumph over the obstacles. Many theorists deny that music can have "extra-musical" meanings, while others claim that some "pure" music is indeed able to tell psychological stories of this sort. The concept of exemplification helps to bridge the gap between these views. It shows how music can refer to qualities *outside* the music, which are at the same time qualities that the music itself possesses. The struggles and the triumph over obstacles are both musical and psychological. Goodman's concept of exemplification gives us an elegant way of talking about how pure musical structure can have extra-musical significance.

Expression

Expression is analyzed as metaphorical exemplification: the predicate in question denotes the work metaphorically rather than literally. Indeed, since Beethoven's

Fifth only metaphorically struggles to victory, for Goodman it should be described as expressing rather than merely exemplifying a struggle to victory. Similarly, whereas *The Scream* exemplifies its swirling brushwork, it expresses feelings of alienation and anguish. The picture not only portrays the chief character as anguished and alienated, but also itself (metaphorically) possesses qualities of anguish and alienation. Thus the composition of the picture – with the chief character squished into the lower right corner, pushed up against the picture plane, turned away from the figures at the other end of the bridge and separated by the lines of the bridge from the life of the town below – exemplifies the very qualities of anguish and alienation that this character is depicted as suffering. Moreover, the swirling brushwork echoes the character's screaming mouth, so that the whole picture seems to scream: it exemplifies screaming. Or rather it expresses the quality of screaming, since the picture refers to screaming, but only metaphorically screams.

One of the advantages of Goodman's view is that it allows for the expression of non-emotional properties. Some theorists of music, in particular, have criticized philosophers for confining attention to the expression of emotional qualities. On Goodman's view, however, poems, paintings and music can all exemplify and hence express such non-emotional properties as fluidity, freshness, storminess and weight; they can (metaphorically) scream and snarl and droop. Goodman gives us a way of talking about the expression of qualities that are metaphorically possessed by artworks but which are not specifically emotional.

Another advantage of the view is that it emphasizes that what a work of art expresses is (partly, at least) a function of the symbol system in which it is a character. To borrow an example from Ernst Gombrich, Mondrian's painting *Broadway Boogie Woogie* expresses gay abandon partly because of the role it plays within the symbol system of Mondrian's *oeuvre*. If it were, *per impossible*, in the futurist pictorial symbol system of Severini's mature style, it might rather express cool aloofness.

Not all artistic expression can be explained in semantic terms, however. If we think of an artwork or part of an artwork as a gesture expressive of some feeling (or other psychological state) in a character or the (implied) author, then the feeling may belong literally, not metaphorically, to both the gesture and the person making it. In Purcell's celebrated lament from *Dido and Aeneas*, for example, Dido is literally experiencing grief and despair at being abandoned by Aeneas and her lament is literally grief-stricken and despairing. In a similar way, Tolstoy's treatment of Anna Karenina is literally sympathetic and compassionate, and the novel *Anna Karenina* literally exhibits – and exemplifies – this sympathy and compassion. More importantly, an account of such examples would require a psychological analysis of the emotions in question and how they can be expressed in life as well as in literature. The sympathy and compassion that Tolstoy exhibits are the same kinds of "life" emotion that we may feel in real life for those whom we perceive to be suffering misfortune. To understand this kind of expression we need a psychological account of expressive gestures and how they are related to the states of mind that they express. Other examples of this sort are even harder for Goodman to deal with. Constable's landscapes and George Butterworth's music often express a love for the English countryside, but it makes no sense to say that artworks love the countryside either literally or metaphorically.

This difficulty is related to another. The reason why we can confidently assert that Constable's landscapes express love for the English countryside, is that we know the context in which they were brought into being; we know that Constable loved the landscapes he painted and we can see this love in, for example, the vibrant freshness of his windswept skies and the loving attention to details of texture and color in the mundane rural objects he depicts. In short, as in the case of representation, knowing the symbol system an artwork is in may not be enough to determine what it expresses. We may also need to know something about its genesis in the artist's intentions.

Ontology

Goodman's views on the ontology of art have also been roundly criticized and widely condemned. According to Goodman, a musical work is identified as the referent of a character in a notational system (a score). A notational system is syntactically and semantically disjoint and differentiated. In a score every mark or inscription is identifiable as belonging to one and only one character,* such as the character for middle C or D above middle C, and has one and only one referent: the sounding tones C or D above middle C. Each sounding tone in turn is unambiguously denoted by one and only one character. Any sequence of sounding tones that complies with the score is an instance of the musical work determined by the score: sameness of spelling is all that counts. A literary work is a character in a notational scheme (a script), so that any inscription or utterance of the script is thereby an instance of the work. Two inscriptions of a novel are instances of the same work because they are spelled in exactly the same way.

Both music and literature are therefore what Goodman calls "allographic" arts: the identity of both is defined broadly speaking by "sameness of spelling." An exact copy of *King Lear* is just another copy of *King Lear*. Any performance of *The Rite of Spring* is just another performance of *The Rite of Spring*. By contrast, paintings, sculptures, etchings, woodcuts and lithographs are all "autographic" arts. Because they are in syntactically dense and undifferentiated symbol systems, they have no distinct characters that can be spelled and read. Consequently, they are identifiable solely by means of their history of production. An autographic form like painting is such that "even the most exact duplication of it does not thereby count as genuine" (Goodman 1968: 113).

Goodman notoriously argues that there is an aesthetic difference between a painting and a forged copy of it even if I cannot presently tell them apart just by looking at them. Even though I cannot see any difference right now between a particular painting and a forgery of it, maybe one day I *will* be able to discriminate perceptually between the two and the fact that one day I may be able to see a difference between them constitutes an aesthetic difference between them for me right now. Goodman's claim that an aesthetic difference need not be a perceptible difference helped to dislodge the idea that "the aesthetic" should be construed narrowly as referring only to properties such as formal properties, that can be grasped *just by looking* at an artwork.

It is probably theorists of music, however, who have found most to grumble about in Goodman's discussion: critics argue that the musical work cannot be

*But see my caveat on p. 180.

identified with whatever complies with a score. First of all, the score leaves unspecified important aspects of music that help to define particular works. A musical work is not just a sequence of tones in a particular order, organized by a particular meter; it is a sequence of tones with dynamic qualities and phrasing, played on particular instruments with particular timbres, and none of these musical dimensions can be adequately captured by a notation. In shaping a phrase, musicians will make certain notes last fractionally longer than others; they will emphasize some more than others; they will play quicker or more slowly, louder or more quietly. Since none of these essential features of a musical work can be notated, the musical work cannot be identified via a notation. Second, a performance with one wrong note is no longer a performance of that work, while a performance of a Chopin mazurka that is an hour long but has no wrong notes counts as a correct performance.

Goodman answers these objections by pointing out that we can identify a piece of music with whatever complies with the score, without thereby committing ourselves to the view that everything aesthetically important about the music is captured in the way it is identified. The idea that a performance of a work with one wrong note is no longer a performance of that work is strictly true without having any important aesthetic consequences: we may still treat the performance as a (slightly wrong) performance of the work and discuss its aesthetic virtues and vices independently of its ontological status. Here, as elsewhere, we have to remember that Goodman's account is highly schematic. At the same time, it has the corresponding virtues of systematicity and elegance.

The distinction between autographic and allographic art forms has been profoundly influential. No one before Goodman had much of philosophical interest to say about forgery. Since then there has been a flurry of work on this topic. Goodman focused attention on the vital role of history of production in the identification of paintings and sculptures. In doing so, however, he inadvertently opened the door to a serious objection to the distinction between autographic and allographic arts. It turns out that what Goodman thinks of as allographic art forms may, like paintings, need to be identified, at least partly, in terms of their history of production. A musical work, for example, may be identifiable not just as a sequence of sounds determined by a score, but as that particular sequence of sounds that was put together by a particular composer at a particular time. Similarly, Borges's tale of Pierre Menard's writing part of *Don Quixote* (at the beginning of the twentieth century under the influence of pragmatism!) seems to show how sameness of spelling does not completely determine the identity of a literary work. Menard appears to have written a different work from Cervantes's.

Goodman, however, bites the bullet. A work is uniquely determined by a text, hence "the supposed two works are really one," and "what Menard wrote is simply another inscription of the text" (Goodman and Elgin 1988: 62). Once again the intuitively plausible is sacrificed to consistency and elegance.

The cognitive value of art

Goodman claims that exemplificationality (which includes expressiveness) is a "symptom of the aesthetic," along with syntactic and semantic density and repleteness.

In a later book, *Ways of Worldmaking*, he adds a fifth symptom, "multiple and complex reference, where a symbol performs several integrated and interacting referential functions, some direct and some mediated through other symbols" (Goodman 1978: 68).

These five symptoms do not define the aesthetic, but are merely *clues* to its presence. Like Arthur Danto, Goodman argues that something can be a work of art in one context and not in another. We should ask not "what is art?" but "when is art?" When something is functioning as an artwork it is functioning as a symbol in a symbol system and exhibiting some or all of the *symptoms of the aesthetic*. These symptoms have in common that they all require studying the symbol itself, not just what it refers to, and they all call for "maximum sensitivity of discrimination" (Goodman 1968: 252).

Here as elsewhere Goodman's focus is on the cognitive and perceptual functions of art. Thus artistic style is also defined in terms of how a work functions as a symbol, in particular what it says, what it exemplifies and what it expresses. Style features are those features of what is said, exemplified or expressed that identify a work as belonging to, for instance, a particular artist, school, period or geographical location. Once again an aesthetic feature – style – cannot be detected unless the reader, listener or viewer makes fine discriminations.

For Goodman, the value of art is essentially cognitive. Art invokes the "use of symbols beyond immediate need" and the purpose of art is *understanding* (Goodman 1968: 258). What about the ancient idea that the arts have some special connection with the emotions? Goodman responds that in our experience of the arts, even the emotions have a cognitive function, helping us to detect subtleties in the properties that a work exemplifies, expresses and possesses.

Assessment and legacy

Goodman's aesthetic theory is both rich and dense. He discusses every significant topic in aesthetics, from representation to expression, from forgery to metaphor, from the ontology of art to aesthetic value, and in every case he has something lucid, original and provocative to say. As I see it, while the approach has been remarkably illuminating in all sorts of ways, it suffers from three major drawbacks that recur in different guises in many different places.

The first drawback is Goodman's apparent denial of the psychological aspects of art, especially in his accounts of representation and expression. The second drawback is his pervasive neglect of the historical context in which a work of art originates. Of course, a symbol system, like a language, has a history, and what an artwork expresses or represents will be partly determined by the history of the symbol system itself. But knowing about the origin of the symbol system is often not enough; we may need to know how individual works within the system originated in order to determine what they mean. This drawback is linked to the first: often what we need to know about the origin of a work are psychological facts about its maker.

The third drawback is Goodman's adherence to nominalism, rather than a philosophy of language that could include a richer semantics, not to mention a pragmatic dimension. Goodman's nominalism leads him to announce that "denotation is the

core of representation" (Goodman 1968: 5), and then retreat to a position where most representations fail to denote. It also leads him to say that only labels can be exemplified or expressed, a view which perhaps explains his neglect of the psychological aspects of expression. Finally, it leads him to take as his paradigm of a symbol system a notation, a symbol system that is quite unlike any language in actual use.

But despite these problems – and perhaps partly because of them – Goodman's work in aesthetics has been enormously influential. *Languages of Art* in particular has been translated into many languages and has had a profound effect on the field of aesthetics, especially, but not exclusively, aesthetics in the Anglo-American tradition. It is an unrelentingly systematic book, highly polemical and written in a trenchant, witty style. What is perhaps most remarkable about it is that despite its many mostly self-imposed drawbacks, it manages to say so much that is interesting and true. All in all, Goodman's contributions, coming from a philosopher already distinguished in other areas such as logic and epistemology, have been a major force in transforming aesthetics into a vigorous and rigorous discipline.

See also Ontology of art (Chapter 23), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Fiction (Chapter 32), Depiction (Chapter 35), Art and knowledge (Chapter 37), Art, expression and emotion (Chapter 39), Fakes and forgeries (Chapter 45).

Note

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19
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Colin Lyas

Frank Sibley was born in Lowestoft in England and after war service as a tank commander went to Oxford to read modern languages. There, under the influence of Ryle, Grice, George Paul and Austin, the atmosphere of whose philosophical work was lastingly to imbue his thinking, he became interested in philosophy and in philosophical aesthetics. Already as an undergraduate, deeply influenced by the careful attention to the use of language advocated by his mentors he became convinced that the clue to understanding problems in aesthetics lay in the careful investigation of what he later called "praise words," "merit and demerit terms" and "aesthetic terms." During 1948 and 1949 he collected vast lists of these from various works of criticism found in Oxford libraries. He sorted these into types and began to explore their relationships. This informed his teaching during the 1950s in the USA and equipped him with the extraordinary range of examples and counterexamples for which his interventions in discussions were so notable. It also led to his first and lastingly influential major contribution to aesthetics, "Aesthetic Concepts" (Sibley 2001).

He once observed that he was doing analytical aesthetics before anyone else, aesthetics at that time being still under the influence of neo-idealism. Some have claimed that he was set on his course by Austin's often quoted remark that in aesthetics it might be profitable to concentrate on modest enquiries into terms like "dainty" and "dumpy" (Austin 1957). But by 1957, Sibley had been pursuing such enquiries for over ten years. And, another historical note, he could not, as some have claimed, have been influenced by Wittgenstein's remarks on aesthetics. These appeared in 1966, many years after the first of Sibley's major papers. In analytic aesthetics he was an original. His own inaugural lecture put his position succinctly:

> It becomes clear that our common language, flexible, varied and evolved to deal with the complexities of various subject matters, proves, if we explore it with care, to be a repository of conceptual distinctions and discriminations we are able to make and an antidote to false models and simple assimilations.
> (Sibley 1966)

After Oxford Sibley taught at Yale, Iowa State, Michigan and Cornell, where he became the chair of a distinguished department. He returned to England in 1963 as founding professor of philosophy at the new University of Lancaster.

It is convenient to divide Sibley's work in aesthetics, setting aside his striking work on the philosophy of mind and perception, into three groups. The first centers on the paper "Aesthetic Concepts" (Sibley 2001) and the papers radiating from it. The second includes work that he thought of great importance but which seems to set off in a new direction. Central here is the posthumously published paper "Adjectives, Predicative and Attributive" (Sibley 2001). The third group comprises a set of important but relatively free-standing papers, including the remarkable "Tastes, Smells, and Aesthetics" also published posthumously (Sibley 2001).

"Aesthetic Concepts" and related papers

The essays marking Sibley's best-known contributions to philosophical aesthetics comprise "Aesthetic Concepts" (1959), "Aesthetic and Nonaesthetic" (1965), "Colours" (1967), "Objectivity and Aesthetics" (1968), "Particularity, Art, and Evaluation" (1974) and "General Criteria and Reasons in Aesthetics" (1983) (all reprinted in Sibley 2001). Although the last of these was published much later than the earlier major essays it was in fact written earlier (Lyas 1996). These essays hang together in a developing sequence.

The first, "Aesthetic Concepts," made a lasting impact on philosophical aesthetics. Part of that had to do with the fact that aesthetic philosophy was ready for a change from the somewhat more abstract generalities that had led Passmore, for example, to talk of the "dreariness of aesthetics." In sharp contradistinction, Sibley's paper was embellished with plausible examples of actual critical discourse and was argued with a force, verve and rigor that were then quite startling. Read at one of the regular get-togethers of his New York state colleagues it was, at the insistence of George Sabine, then in charge of Sibley's department at Cornell, and against the resistance of Sibley's perfectionism, published in the *Philosophical Review*. To this day replies and references to it are offered regularly, amounting, so Sibley told me, to some thousands. He publicly replied to only one of these, although an unpublished manuscript contains remarks on rejoinders by Kivy (1973) and Cohen (1973).

"Aesthetic Concepts" asserted rather than argued a relatively simple and apparently straightforward point. Take the remark: "what makes that picture balanced is the red mass in the lower left-hand corner." Here various things are going on. On the one hand there is reference to the fact that a work possesses a feature, namely, balance. On the other hand, there is a reference to the fact that there is a red mass in the left-hand corner of the picture. And there is the assertion that the former in some way depends on the latter. It struck Sibley with some force that anyone in possession of normal powers of vision could see the red patch. However, it would be possible to see the red patch and yet not see that the picture was balanced. And it would be possible to see that the picture was balanced without seeing that what gives it balance is the positioning of a red patch. To see the balance requires taste, and the term "balance" is, consequently, in Sibley's terminology, an aesthetic, or taste concept.

Such things as balance are dependent, emergent properties. Change the position of the red mass and the balance might be lost. Fail to see the red mass and one might fail to see what is emergent from it. All this is not so much argued as pointed out using examples.

Now a controversial assertion is made. For although the balance depends on the red patch, there is no logical inference from "there is a large mass of red in that position" to "that picture is balanced." Indeed no knowledge, however comprehensive, of the presence of what are called the "nonaesthetic" features, color patches, for example, of a work, licenses any conclusion as to the presence of such aesthetic properties as grace and balance. Hence follows Sibley's conclusion that aesthetic terms are not positively condition governed. In this they contrast with terms like "square," for here there is a set of conditions which, if fulfilled, entails that something is a square. Similarly, with a term like "intelligence," there is an open-ended set of things which might entail that someone is intelligent. But no knowledge of the nonaesthetic properties of a work can entail that a work has this or that aesthetic feature. At most we can argue that some set of nonaesthetic properties may entail that a work will *not* have a certain aesthetic feature. (That it is predominantly in pale pastel colors, for example, will defeat the claim that it is garish.)

All this is dealt with in the first part of "Aesthetic Concepts." Its implications are important. Aesthetic disputes arise not because people cannot see nonaesthetic properties, but they arise because although seeing these properties, they cannot see the aesthetic properties emergent from them. We also have an inclination to believe that disputes are rational if there are decision procedures for their settlement. Those decision procedures are often thought to be reducible to inductive or deductive reasoning. But if Sibley is right, these procedures will not help in cases of aesthetic disputation. This is argued, as a direct consequence of the findings of "Aesthetic Concepts," in the adjunct paper "Aesthetic and Nonaesthetic" (Sibley 2001). If Sibley is right, from the fact that we have access to a particular piece of nonaesthetic information, for example, that there is a red patch in a certain position, nothing deductively follows about whether or not a work is balanced. There would be no logical contradiction in asserting that although there is a red patch in a certain position, the work is not balanced. Induction fares little better. True, we might form the generalization that pictures with color masses in certain positions tend to have certain aesthetic features. But, as everyone who has tried to replace taste with inductive rules of thumb will know, not only may the next case let us down, but we still are not led to *see* the quality and so are not led to aesthetic enjoyment.

Sibley draws two conclusions. The first, argued in "Aesthetic and Nonaesthetic," is about critical explanation. It is often assumed that the task of critics is to prove by arguments that works have this or that property, and the use of the word "reason" in assertions like "the reason it is balanced is the presence of this mass" might suggest that a proof is being offered. But "reason" is ambiguous. What the critic under this description wants is a *reason for inferring* from the fact that the work has certain nonaesthetic features, the conclusion that it is balanced. If Sibley is right, though, in saying there is no safe inference from statements about nonaesthetic features to statements about aesthetic features, then such reasons are not to be had. The most we can have is explanatory reasons. Thus, having seen that a work is balanced, we can go on to ask on what features of the work that balance depends: for example it might depend on the placing of that mass. But that is a reason for the work being balanced, not a reason for believing it is. Seeing the balance we can, testably, ask on what it depends, testably because if someone says that it depends on that color mass we can, especially

with image manipulation, see whether altering the position of the mass spoils the balance. If we cannot see the balance, though, we have nothing to investigate.

If inductive and deductive reasoning are not apropos, what is? Here there are two things to be noted. One is that deduction and induction do not exhaust the ways in which we can get someone to see something. Another alternative is perception, and here Sibley's aesthetics becomes a piece with his work on perception. We can get people to see. This is the claim of the second part of "Aesthetic Concepts." There we have a description of the ways in which we might get someone to see something in a picture. We have what Sibley sometimes refers to, always with scare quotes, as "perceptual proof." Aesthetics, he repeatedly stresses, is to do with perception. We have to see the qualities for which a work is worth our attention, and argument, though it might get us to believe *that* a work has certain properties, cannot get us to *see* them.

With that claim goes a second area that needs attention. There is a temptation to say that since disputes in aesthetics cannot be settled by deductive or inductive argument, there is something "subjective" about aesthetics. Here there are two answers. First, the mere fact that aesthetic disputes cannot be settled by ratiocinative proofs does not establish that those disputes are pseudo-disputes about matters of taste. That follows only if it can be shown that these ratiocinative methods are the only ways in which disputes can be settled. But we can also settle disputes by looking and seeing, as we indeed settle disputes as to whether it is raining outside. So to make aesthetics a perceptual matter is not to undermine the possibility that decision procedures exist in aesthetics.

Second, it may be replied that this is not enough. If there is a decision procedure in terms of which disputes can be settled, one might expect those disputes to be settled. But in aesthetics disputes are endemic. There is simply too much disagreement for objectivity to be possible in aesthetics.

It is for this reason that there is a natural connection between the two papers "Aesthetic Concepts" and "Aesthetic and Nonaesthetic" and the two papers "Colours" (Sibley 2001) and "Objectivity and Aesthetics" (Sibley 2001). Once it is claimed that aesthetics is a perceptual matter, there is room for a proof that its being a perceptual matter is compatible with the possibility of objectivity. Sibley argues thus: first, doubts about the objectivity of our color language are philosophical doubts. In the traffic of life we are happy with the thoughts that the light really was red when the motorist jumped it and that Paul Newman has blue eyes. This being so, we can ask upon what that objectivity is founded. Second, we should ask whether the conditions which make it possible to predicate the truth or falsity of color perceptual judgments might not also be met when we make aesthetic perceptual judgments. If so, then aesthetic judgments can be thought of, for all practical purposes, as being as objective as color judgments in practice are taken to be. So, in "Colours," Sibley asks what it is that underpins our ability to say that grass is green, tomatoes are red and the sky blue. The answer is that this depends upon a certain kind of agreement in judgments among those who use the color language where, when there are disputes, we take the maximum discriminators as the reference group. The next step is obvious. We ask whether that kind of agreement is also possible in the case of aesthetic judgments. Sibley concludes that it is.

In "Colours" Sibley is careful not to tie the reference group of color perceivers to any majority. It is possible that a color language could exist even if a minority of people were fully color sighted, and they only fugitively. Hence it follows that widespread disagreement is not of itself evidence of subjectivity. It also follows that the fact that there are disagreements in aesthetics is not evidence of the subjectivity of that discipline. Indeed we might expect there to be more possibilities of disagreement in aesthetics, for whereas in color perception the sources of disagreement are likely to be physiological in origin (color blindness), in aesthetics there are, as well as physiological factors such as tone-deafness and color blindness, also psychological differences and prejudices to be taken account of (often due to differences in age, temperament and upbringing). (That claim occasions disquiet in a notable reply to Sibley by Michael Tanner 1968.)

Sibley concludes that we have as much reason to say that willow trees are elegant, sunsets sublime, deer graceful as we do to say that tomatoes are red. To that we can add that Sibley believes perception to be educable. This is certainly true of color perception. One can learn to make finer and finer discriminations. So, too, with aesthetic matters. A child who is capable of enjoying simple aesthetic pleasures can, by exposure to objects of greater and greater complexity, come to appreciate more sophisticated things. Aesthetic disagreement might as much be due to the fact that we deprive people of opportunities for aesthetic advancement as to the fact that there is nothing to see. Here a favorite Sibley example was wine tasting which, he believed, shared with aesthetic perception the dependence on a minority reference group of sometimes patchy agreements in judgments honed by experience. It is, however, a skill to which all could aspire through the activity of sampling.

The set of papers which constitutes this first major phase is augmented by the paper "General Criteria and Reasons in Aesthetics" (Sibley 2001). In "Aesthetic Concepts" Sibley had adumbrated a distinction between aesthetic judgments, such as the comment that a line in a picture is graceful, and aesthetic verdicts, or overall judgments, as when we talk about goodness of a whole work. In "Aesthetic Concepts" he asserts that from nonaesthetic judgments, aesthetic judgments do not logically follow. When he comes to the relation between aesthetic judgments and overall verdicts, however, the situation is more complex. On the one hand there are particularists, who argue that no general reasons can be given for aesthetic judgments. The selfsame thing that in one work may contribute to excellence can, in another, be the very thing that mars a work. The wit that is admired in a comedy might spoil a tragedy. On the other hand there are generalists, like Beardsley (1958), who argue that there can be general reasons for concluding that a work has merit, although he argues that the relation is probabilistic. Unity, for example, is generally a merit.

Sibley's paper takes issue with both particularists and generalists. Although he agrees that, when the move is from judgments about nonaesthetic features to judgments about aesthetic features, the particularist is right, he thinks the particularists have overlooked the fact that the relation between a nonaesthetic feature and an aesthetic feature (which is not an entailment relation) is quite unlike the relation between an aesthetic feature like wit and an overall feature like goodness. This *is* a logical relation. But on this he takes issue with Beardsley. Beardsley wished to find aesthetic features that would always count positively towards an overall judgment,

offering unity and complexity as examples, but he also seemed to think the relation of generality to be an inductive one. Sibley objects to this on two counts. First, there are no features that always count positively for a judgment. Even unity can be the unity of mediocrity. Second, however, the relation between a property like wit, which he calls a "merit term," and overall goodness is not simply inductive. For there would be something *logically* odd in saying that the reason why something is bad is that it has the merit of wit. Hence he argues that merit features, such as wit, are prima facie merits, a term he borrowed from W. D. Ross. A prima facie merit could be defeated as an actual merit by, for example, being out of place in a particular work. But, and this is the important conclusion, there is no algorithm which will tell us for any particular work whether a prima facie merit is an actual merit. Nor can we say the more merits the better. The merits have to work and work together, and whether they do so is a matter for judgment.

This phase of Sibley's work is completed by "Particularity, Art and Evaluation" (Sibley 2001). That paper takes up Strawson's (1974) attempt to explain the "putative tautology" that "there are no general criteria of excellence in the aesthetic sphere" as there are in the moral sphere. One striking feature of Sibley's paper is its assertion that the nature of aesthetic appraisal is not clarified simply by clarifying the concept of art. That goes against those, such as Croce (1992), who have argued the exact opposite, and it is related to his later work in which aesthetic judgments of nature take a prominent position. The paper also deals with something implicit in "Aesthetic Concepts," namely a doubt about any easily made distinction between the evaluative and the descriptive. It also adds to earlier discussions a more careful classification of terms. These now include the solely evaluative ("good," "bad," "nice" and "nasty"); the descriptive merit terms ("sharp" used of razors); and evaluation-added property terms like "elegant," "garish," "tasty" and "insipid." The latter are both descriptive and evaluative. Finally the paper offers a more refined account of the relation between aesthetic qualities and the features on which they depend, in terms of a distinction between determinate properties and determinable properties. Something is valued in terms of some determinate quality (for example, being curved in just that way), rather than by just being curved. This adds strength to his earlier claim that, when the relation between nonaesthetic and aesthetic features is in question, each work must be judged by its own standards. For a determinate property, being a property special to one particular work, will have a unique dependence relation to the aesthetic features emerging from it.

The papers I have grouped together, notably "Aesthetic Concepts," attracted, and continue to attract, substantial attention. Some have attempted to undermine Sibley's distinction between the aesthetic and the nonaesthetic. These include Cohen (1973), who has queried the very possibility of making a distinction between the nonaesthetic and the aesthetic. Allowing the distinction, Kivy (1973) has argued that there are condition-governed aesthetic features; Scruton (1974) seems to argue something similar and there is a characteristically deft intervention on this matter by Iseminger (1973). More radically, Meager (1970) objected to any talk of aesthetic properties. Some valuable refinements to Sibley's account of aesthetic descriptions is offered by Budd (2006). Those who are inclined to join the debate ought to be warned of one thing that Sibley continually stressed in private discussions: he was

not offering a definition of the aesthetic. Indeed not: for nonconditioned governance equally characterizes other emergent properties, such as the expression on a person's face. He was concerned only to remark on what he thought an obvious feature of aesthetic judgments and to explore some of its consequences. He nowhere said that the aesthetic could be defined by reference to this feature. Indeed, as far as I know his only remarks on what makes a feature aesthetic are some fragmentary remarks, to which I shall return, in "Aesthetics and the Looks of Things" (Sibley 2001). However, as well as those who have criticized Sibley's views some more recently have found them a fruitful starting point in discussions of supervenience and realism. Notable here is work by Levinson (1990). Recently, too, there has been critical discussion of the remarks on particularity and generality (see for one example, Connolly and Haydar 2003).

A second phase: attribute and predicative adjectives

After 1965 Sibley's publications became more intermittent. This was owing in part to his devotion to the new University of Lancaster, in the creation of both a major institution and a major department. Those efforts were, at least in part, responsible for a harrowing period of depressive illness followed by a long struggle with the pernicious leukemia from which he was to die. During those years he was immensely influential through his discussions with his colleagues and friends and through the distinctive and sometimes much feared interventions in seminars and conferences. Between 1965 and his death, apart from papers on perception and on thinking, he published in aesthetics his Inaugural Lecture at Lancaster (Sibley 1966), and a contribution to a symposium with Eva Schaper notable for this rejoinder to those inclined to make aesthetics peripheral in philosophy:

> Indeed far from it being true that aesthetics is peripheral to philosophy, aestheticians encounter ranges of concepts wider than and inevitably inclusive of those studied by most other branches of philosophy. A multitude of terms and concepts – too varied to fit into a few categories of properties and non-properties, but quite as important as the epistemologist's favourites for our characterization, comprehension and organization of the world and our experience of it – remain unexplored, and it is largely left to aestheticians to explore them.
>
> (Sibley 2001: 53)

During this period of relative silence, it was quite clear to those who knew him that he was continually working on a wide range of problems. These were given one focus through his meditations on Peter Geach's paper "Good and Evil" (1957). That paper essayed a distinction between what Geach called "predicative" and "attributive" adjectives. In some cases, we need to know to what class a thing belongs before being able to ascertain the truth of a statement about it. Thus whether or not a thing is a small something or other depends on the criteria for size in things of that sort. What is small for an elephant would be large for a mouse. That sort of adjective

Geach calls attributive. On the other hand there are terms like red. We do not need to know the class to which a thing belongs in order to know that it is red. Sibley was struck by this distinction and worked incessantly on it, for at least the last ten years of his life. This led to a set of papers, which was published posthumously (Sibley 2001).

At the basis of this later work there is "Adjectives, Predicative and Attributive" which probes Geach's distinction (Sibley 2001). This demonstrates how much more complex was the issue than Geach might have thought. Sibley was in no doubt that there is a distinction between the predicative and attributive uses of adjectives. On the one hand there are cases in which, in order to say that something is beautiful, we need to know what criteria govern beauty for that kind of thing, the criteria for beautiful Tamworth pigs being different from those for beautiful examples of leg ulcers. On the other, there are cases, say in talking about a pebble, in which one might make the judgment of beauty *simpliciter*. That there is a difference is suggested by the fact that "beautiful for a pig" seems all right whereas "beautiful for a pebble" seems odd.

The area that Sibley explored raises questions about aesthetics, some of which have haunted us at least since Kant. One is about the truth of the claim made, for example, by Savile and Scruton, that "beauty is always attributive," so that, Savile claimed, we can only ask whether X is a beautiful A (Savile 1982). That judgment is, given Sibley's later work, in need of careful defense. Second, some, Wollheim (1980), for example, taking issue with Croce (1992), have spoken as if genre judgments are central to aesthetic judgment, so that the judgment of a poem might be conditioned by what one knows of the criteria for sonnets. But this implies that aesthetic judgments are attributive, a claim which again requires a clear understanding of the distinction between the predicative and the attributive. Third, Sibley was interested in certain puzzling phenomena in the aesthetics of nature. Why, for example, are toads thought to be ugly? Why, having been moved to delight by a display of daffodils, do we alter that opinion on finding out that they are made of plastic, even though they might still look the same? Here, he thought, matters could be illuminated by the proper understanding of judgments of nature as attributive. This was argued in a paper entitled "Aesthetic Judgements: Pebbles, Faces, and Fields of Litter" (Sibley 2001). This work has begun to interest those working in the currently topical area of the aesthetics of nature (Foster 2001). Time and again Sibley returned to a favorite example: we are shown a framed pink curve and remark with delight on it. The frame is removed and we see that the curve is in fact the curve of a pig's backside. He was much taken with investigating our seeming reluctance to argue as follows: "this curve is beautiful: this curve is a pig's backside: therefore this pig's backside is beautiful."

Other important papers

The third category of papers is somewhat more miscellaneous, though the papers are united by the careful use of examples and close analysis of arguments and distinctions. Some are now published. Notable here are a brilliant cameo "Is Art an Open Concept?" (Sibley 1960); the inaugural lecture referred to earlier (Sibley 1966); a paper "Originality and Value" (Sibley 2001), which argues that value is not inherent in the concept of

originality; and an early paper "Aesthetics and the Looks of Things" (Sibley 2001). This last paper is notable for two things. First, many, following Bullough (1912), have argued that aesthetics is to do with how things look rather than how they are. Against that Sibley, with a characteristic barrage of examples, argues that this account simply will not fit our aesthetic characterizations. A person who says that a line is delicate or graceful is saying that the line *is* these things. Second, Sibley, in a startling anticipation of various sociobiological theories of value, of which Dawkins (1999) provides a notable recent example, raises the question why we value the aesthetic properties of things. His answer is that these valuations reflect interests we have as biological beings. His final published paper was "Making Music Our Own" (Sibley 2001), which celebrates, and defends against certain purists, the richness of the figurative language by which we appropriate music. This is acutely and critically discussed by Budd (2006).

Other papers were posthumously published (Sibley 2001). These are written with a characteristic force but some, at the same time, display the fey, not to say surreal, humor which his friends cherished and which is not always visible in earlier work. They include the mischievously entitled paper "Why the *Mona Lisa* May Not Be a Painting," which attempts to arbitrate between those who wish to identify the *Mona Lisa* with a particular spatiotemporal material instantiation and those who wish to treat it as a token of a type. On Sibley's account both are right. There is also a paper "Arts or the Aesthetic – Which Comes First?" which argues, contra a line of thinkers from Croce to Savile, that the aesthetic does. For those who wish to hear the master's voice, it is worth remarking that shortly before his death Sibley recorded this paper for the Open University.

However, for those who wish to gain some sense of the distinctive power and force of Sibley's philosophical thinking – the thinking that for many of us became exemplary – I commend especially the exquisite paper "Tastes, Smells, and Aesthetics" Sibley (2001). Here we find the wit, the lucidity and the rootedness in the bedrock of concrete example. This latter was something imbibed from his deeply admired teacher Ryle, who is mentioned with great respect in this paper. Above all there is the never less than immensely impressive earnestness behind the dogged search for truth and the fearsome power, which many of us experienced, for our chastened benefit, to detect and reject inadequate assertions about the matter in hand that deflected from the discovery of truth.

See also Kant (Chapter 5), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Creativity (Chapter 42).

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20
WOLLHEIM

Derek Matravers

Richard Wollheim was born in 1923 in London. His father was Eric Wollheim who was at the time the London manager for Diaghilev. His mother had been a Gaiety girl; she left the stage when she married. Wollheim was educated at Westminster School and then, after active service in the Second World War, he went to Oxford to complete degrees in history and PPE (politics, philosophy and economics). Despite relatively little study of the subject he was recruited by A. J. Ayer for the Philosophy Department at University College London. He remained there for thirty-three years, becoming Grote Professor in 1963. In 1983 he moved to America where he taught at various universities before returning to England shortly before his death in 2003.

Wollheim's contribution to aesthetics needs to be understood in the context of at least two aspects of his broader intellectual framework. First, he believed that insights derived from psychoanalysis were important in understanding both ourselves and cultural phenomena, including the arts; he himself spent time under analysis. Although he wrote an essay "Freud and the Understanding of Art" and a highly regarded book that covered the rest of Freud's thought, his approach was closer to that of Melanie Klein (although he was by no means an orthodox Kleinian) (Wollheim 1973b [1970], 1971). Second, he had no respect for disciplinary boundaries; his work drew freely on philosophy, psychology, psychoanalysis, art criticism and art history. One final caveat: Wollheim's work stands apart from the general thrust of Anglo-American philosophy in that it does not pursue conceptual analysis or reductive explanation. His work remains subtle, sophisticated and elusive, and hence resists clear explication. Of the many areas to which he contributed in aesthetics, I will cover six: the nature and ontology of art; depiction; expression; intention, interpretation and evaluation; style; and modernist art theory.

An element of Wollheim's work that played a part in his thinking about several of these areas was his notion of "complex projection," a notion he attempted to clarify several times. Complex projection is a disposition we develop early in our psychosexual development. At some stage (during the working through of the Kleinian "depressive position") the child will find itself with ambivalent and fluctuating attitudes to his or her parents, which we can summarize as love and hate. Inasmuch as the former dominates, it results in a tendency to "projection": "the tendency to see the object as good or of value" (Wollheim 1986: 214). Projection is a notion familiar from

psychoanalysis. We can take as an example someone who finds it difficult to tolerate the hostile feelings they have towards another person. To cope with this they "project" those very feelings onto that person and form the false belief that that person harbors hostile feelings towards them. Wollheim calls this "simple projection" and contrasts it with the notion he will use. There are two differences between the former and the latter. In simple projection there is a great deal of latitude as to what it is onto which the emotion gets projected; as Wollheim puts it, "almost anyone can turn out to be the paranoiac's enemy" (1986: 214). In complex projection, there "has to be a real match or correspondence" between the outer world and the inner state of the person doing the projecting. Second, the result of complex projection is not a false belief; rather the world is seen as "of a piece" with the projector's mental states. What is imputed to the relevant part of the world is something that "corresponds" to the inner state. This is represented by the speaker describing the world using, as a metaphor, the term which would be used to describe the inner state literally, or using a term introduced into the language for this very purpose. Wollheim's view is that value originates in the projection of "archaic bliss, of love satisfied" (1986: 215).

Nature and ontology of art

The link between this tendency for projection and the nature of art is not immediate. There are certain instinctual drives – paradigmatically the sexual drive – which manifest themselves in a fairly direct way in certain activities. Art is not like that; instead, Wollheim characterizes art as an instance of what Wittgenstein called "a form of life." This is an elusive notion, but we can at least say that the impulse to produce art cannot be identified independently of the way art is produced in a certain society. There is a direct analogy with language: there is "a complex of habits, experiences, skills, with which language interlocks in that it could not be identified without them and, equally, they cannot be identified without reference to it" (Wollheim 1980b: 104). Pursuing the analogy, asking "is this item a work of art?," is akin to asking "is this item a piece of language?" It is not a sensible question to ask in the abstract; a great deal will depend upon the circumstances of the item's production, the intentions behind it, and how it is received. Three consequences follow which put Wollheim's view in opposition to the standard contemporary discussion of the definition of art.

First, Wollheim is skeptical of the approach that seeks to identify what it is to be a work of art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. In a later essay (although it is not always wise to assume that he is consistent across his *oeuvre*) he distinguishes between "conditions of application" and "assumptions of applicability" (Wollheim 1993a). The former are necessary and sufficient conditions, while the latter are assumptions about what would be in place in order for an object to be what it is purported to be. While the latter must hold generally, they can fail in particular cases. The standard methodology of the contemporary debate over the definition of art is the "method of indiscernibles." That is, a situation is considered in which there are two indiscernible objects, one of which is a work of art and the other of which is not. Anything which is true of both objects (including, crucially, their indiscernibility)

cannot be one of the conditions of application of "art." However, this situation – even if it were possible in a single instance – tells us nothing about the "assumptions of applicability" of "art." It may be that "the complex of habits, experiences, skills" that underlie the institutions of art could not survive were it true in general that there were not perceptual differences between objects which are art and objects which are not art. Second, as is apparent from the psychological springs which feed into the "form of life" another of the assumptions of applicability is that art is valuable. That there are individual works of art that are not valuable does nothing to show that we have a value-free "classificatory" sense of "art." Such differences underpin Wollheim's celebrated refutation of the "institutional theory of art"; theories that attempt to define art in terms of an object standing in a certain social relation to an institution ("the artworld") (Dickie 1974). Wollheim argues that such views face a dilemma. Either there are reasons why they stand in such relations or there are not. If there are reasons, then it is those reasons that are of interest; that the work stands in a certain relation is simply confirmation that such reasons apply. If there are no such reasons, then the most such a theory can hope to deliver is a set of objects collected together for no reason at all (Wollheim 1980d). Neither alternative is attractive. Although perhaps not as decisive against the institutionalist as is sometimes thought, "Wollheim's dilemma" would need to be confronted by any plausible institutionalism. Finally, as we shall see, Wollheim had a much narrower view of art than the contemporary debate allows. To take the case of painting (the art form about which he wrote most) he thought a painting could only be a work of art given certain constraints on the mental states of the painter, the way those mental states cause the painter to mark the object, and the mental state those marks set up in the spectator (Wollheim 1987: 22). Such constraints are met by a minority of paintings. Much of what counts as art on contemporary accounts (including, but not limited to, works of Sunday painters, people who paint for distraction or to relax, forgers, people who paint for therapeutic reasons, people who paint for the tourist trade, or to decorate corporate buildings) would not, for Wollheim, count as art (1987: 13).

Although Wollheim did not return to the issue of the ontology of art after his first work on aesthetics, *Art and Its Objects*, his thought has spawned a lively debate. Wollheim divides works of art into two kinds. First, there are those that bear a close relation to physical objects (he does not commit himself as to whether the relation is one of identity, constitution or some other relation). This kind includes paintings and sculptures. For the second kind, which includes works of music, literature and prints, he adopts Peirce's distinction between types and tokens. *David Copperfield* is a type of which there are many tokens. Wollheim distinguishes types from similar means of classification, such as classes and universals (1980b: 74–84). Although he does more than is sometimes thought (including considering whether types are eternal and hence that works cannot be created) there is much that would need to be done to substantiate the view (Dodd 2007).

Depiction

Of all his work in aesthetics, Wollheim is probably most associated with his work on pictorial representation. The experience of a pictorial representation of X differs from the experience of seeing X face to face in that (generally) the former experience

has an element of "twofoldness"; we are aware of the surface of the picture and aware of the "absent object" – that which the picture is a picture of. Ernst Gombrich had earlier provided an analysis of this experience, arguing that we switch between these two folds: first experiencing one (the surface) and then the other (the absent object) (Gombrich 1977: 4–5). Wollheim argued, plausibly, that such switching is not true to our phenomenology. In his early published views, he drew on Wittgenstein's analysis of aspect perception to provide an alternative analysis: "X is a pictorial representation of Y" can be analyzed as "X can be seen as Y." The manifest implausibilities of this view quickly led him to abandon it in favor of the analysis that "Y can be seen in X." Seeing-in is a distinctive kind of perception. As we would expect, it is an experience with two "aspects": the "configurational aspect" (which is an experience "modeled on" our awareness of the painted surface) and "the recognitional aspect" (which is an experience "modeled on" the experience we would have, were we to see the object in the picture face-to-face). Such an experience can be prompted by natural objects; we can see dragons in clouds, and figures in the ice on panes of glass. What is distinctive about pictorial representation is that there is a "standard of correctness" provided by the intentions of the creator. In short, for X to depict Y, it must be the case both the Y can be seen in X, and that whoever created X intended that Y could be seen in X (Wollheim 1980e).

The distinction between a painted surface that is a representation and a painted surface that is only a painted surface (such as a painted wall) is that the former provides us not only with an awareness of the surface, but with an experience of a three-dimensional space (which is not literally present) and a standard of correctness as to what can be seen in that space. Two consequences immediately follow. First, some paintings lack twofoldness. Some canvases by Barnett Newman lack the experience of depth and some successful *trompe l'œils* do not provide us with an awareness as of the surface. On Wollheim's view, these are not representations (1987: 62). Second, for Wollheim the important distinction is between painted surfaces that are representations and painted surfaces that are not representations. Another distinction – between so-called "abstract paintings" and figurative paintings (paintings that do not and paintings that do represent things that we might meet with in space) – is a relatively minor division within painted surfaces that are representations (Wollheim 1987: 21).

The view has been subject to criticism on two fronts. The first rejects the view that pictorial representation should be analyzed in terms of a distinctive kind of perception. Alternatives that have been provided include a semiotic analysis (Goodman 1976; Kulvicki 2006) and an analysis in terms of the activation of certain distinctive recognitional capacities (Lopes 1996). The second accepts the perceptual analysis, but holds that Wollheim has not provided an adequate account of the experience. We can divide this criticism into three broad problems: that he has not described a possible experience; that he has not specified the relation between the two aspects of the experience; and that he has not characterized the two aspects of the experience.

The problem with Wollheim's characterization of the experience stems directly from his rejection of Gombrich's view that we experience each aspect of the experience separately. According to Wollheim, when we see Y in X we experience Y as within something of which we are also visually aware: X. However, it would seem that we cannot simultaneously see two objects where one is experienced as being within the

other (putting aside cases in which the first object is transparent or translucent, which are irrelevant here). Wollheim would argue that this consequence would follow were each of the two aspects of the experience equivalent to the experience of seeing face-to-face; however, this is something he explicitly rejects. However, as we shall see, this reply merely stores up problems for later on (for an interesting discussion of this problem, see Kulvicki 2009).

The second problem concerns the relation between the two aspects. The issues are murky from the outset as the notion of "aspects of experience" is not pellucid. Is seeing-in a simple conjunction of the two aspects of experience or is the relation more complicated? Building on Wollheim's work, Robert Hopkins has argued that rather than there being two aspects of a single experience the two aspects are an abstraction from a single complex experience. To see a *Y* in *X* is to have the experience of *X* resembling *Y* in respect of "outline shape" (Hopkins 1998). Whether depiction involves an experience of two aspects, or a single experience from which the two aspects are an abstraction, has proved a pivotal area of debate (Abell and Bantinaki 2010).

The third problem concerns the nature of the two aspects. From Wollheim's reply to our first problem we know they do not have the features of the correlative face-to-face experience. However, such face-to-face experiences seem the only thing to which we can appeal in order to grasp the aspects' nature. Wollheim was adamant that thinking about the correlative face-to-face experience would do nothing to illuminate our understanding. Instead, he relied upon the fact that we are all familiar with the experience of seeing-in, and hence he would only need to gesture at what was being talked about in order for us to grasp what was at issue. However, there are two problems with this. First, familiarity is not understanding; that we are familiar with an experience does make its nature clear to us. Second, although we are familiar with the experience there is no independent court of appeal to adjudicate as to whether or not Wollheim has given us a correct analysis. He provides *no account at all* of either the configurational or the recognitional aspect. In the words of Malcolm Budd, what Wollheim has given us is "an elusive construction of two will-o'-the-wisps" (Budd 1992: 272). Although the two aspects necessarily come together when we are experiencing a depiction, Wollheim rightly insists that, on occasion, each could fade into the background to the extent that it almost disappears. Bellini's *Doge of Venice* is sufficiently illusionistic for the configurational aspect to be almost absent from our experience of it. An observer who focuses on (say) the way the painter has captured the stretch of a neck in looking at a John Singer Sargent might find the recognitional aspect almost absent. In each case, at just that moment when the one aspect drops away and the observer's experience should be exclusively of the nonabsent aspect, his or her experience is of something different: an "as if" face-to-face experience of the Doge and a face-to-face experience of the painted surface, respectively (Budd 1992: 271–72). Others have attempted to supplement and complete Wollheim's account, although there is no agreement that such efforts have met with success (Walton 1992).

Expression

Wollheim's account of expression draws on his views of complex projection described above. Once more, his views changed over time; sometimes he applied the

same account to experiencing the world and experiencing art as expressive and sometimes he distinguished between the two (I shall consider only art). Sometimes we experience a work of art as the appropriate recipient of our projected mental states. Once such states are projected, we experience them as being "of a piece" with our minds. We then apply to such works metaphorically the same term we would use to describe our state of mind literally (Wollheim 1993c [1991]).

There are a number of puzzles with this account. Let us put aside the fact that the world is taken to be correlative to our mental states twice in the account – once as a precondition of projection and once as a result of projection – and focus on the role of projection itself. There are two roles that it could play in the account. First, it could be part of a causal account: it is part of the psychological story as to how we come to experience a work as expressive. Second, it could be part of the constitutive account: it could feature within our experience of the work as expressive. As for the first, that is not a task for philosophy. The correct causal account is an empirical matter about which philosophy has no commitments (Wollheim himself was inconsistent on this issue). However, the second is simply implausible. Not only does complex projection not figure in our conscious experience of expression, it is manifestly false that only people with the requisite mental states to project are able to experience works as expressive (Budd 2001). Wollheim attempted to accommodate this fact by talking of the experience somehow "intimating its actual history" in projection, although it is difficult to see how such an accommodation can be made credible (Wollheim 1993c: 153).

Interpretation and evaluation

Wollheim's writing on interpretation and criticism is characterized by his sophisticated appreciation of the arts. If one had to locate his views in the current spectrum of orthodox positions one would describe him as an "actual intentionalist," although his position little resembles the subject of the celebrated attack by Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954). The best model for criticism, according to Wollheim, was that of retrieving the intentions that terminated upon the work. What falls under intention is broad; it includes "the desires, thoughts, beliefs, experiences, emotions, and commitments that motivate the artist to paint as he does" (Wollheim 1987: 44). Wollheim's view is that, except in certain special cases, the intention is not fully formed in the mind of the artist prior to the creation of the work. Rather, the mental state of the artist causes him or her to manipulate the medium in order for it to be the vehicle of meaning, in the expectation that a "suitably informed and sensitive spectator" will be able to retrieve that meaning in experience. Such retrieval is no simple matter, as among the mental states of the artist will be the motivation to complex projection as well as the desire for reparation (repairing the violence inflicted on loved ones early in one's psychosexual history). Wollheim gives an amusing yet instructive account of his critical methodology:

> it often took the first hour or so in front of a painting for stray associations or motivated misperceptions to settle down, and it was only then with the

> same amount of time or more to spend looking at it, that the picture could be relied upon to disclose itself as it was … To the experience, the hard-won experience, of painting I then recruited the findings of psychology, and in particular the hypotheses of psychoanalysis, in order to grasp the intention of the artist as revealed in it.
>
> (Wollheim 1987: 8)

Intentions play the role they do for Wollheim primarily because it is only when considered as in intentional activity that art can be seen as meaningful, that is, as he says, "the standard pattern of explanation" (Wollheim 1987: 37). However, it also enables his account to better match the complexities of actual critical practice. Consider an alternative view – referred to by Wollheim as "the scrutiny view." Such a view postulates a dilemma for its opponents. Either a feature of the work is there in the work or it is not. If it is there in the work, then it is available to scrutiny and reference to intentions is redundant. If it is not there in the work, it is not relevant to a critical appraisal of it and thus reference to intentions is also redundant. The first point to make against this is that – even by its own lights – the second horn of the dilemma is false. Various facts about a work will be relevant to its critical appraisal, even if they are not available to someone with no background knowledge of the work: that the work is a solution to a particular aesthetic or artistic problem; that some features of it are deliberate, and others a matter of accident; and that the creator might have had a change of mind in making it. The more fundamental point, however, is that there is no dilemma. There are features of works that become available to scrutiny only to those who are aware of the creator's intentions and, provided these enrich our experience of the work and enable us to understand it better, they are critically relevant (Wollheim 1980c). Wollheim's attack on "the scrutiny view" is plausible; whether his view is clearly preferable to some more sophisticated intentionalisms that draw back from claiming they are retrieving psychological reality is open to question (Levinson 1998).

Wollheim's thoughts on interpretation are clearly linked to his thoughts on evaluation, a matter on which he wrote little that was explicit. He is clear that intersubjective agreement in evaluative judgment in itself means little; the agreement could be fortuitous. What is important is the grounds for this agreement. In the essay in which he most explicitly addresses the topic he argues that, among the grounds the spectator will have for evaluating a piece are states of mind the spectator projects onto it (Wollheim 1980a: 239–40). However, in a slightly earlier essay it is the mental qualities of the creator that are more to the fore. Wollheim claims that there is only one way in which the activity of making a work of art "can add to its significance" and that is when the activity constitutes a process of self-knowledge. The number of ways in which the activity of making a work of art detracts from its significance can be grouped under two broad headings. The first is when a creator's projection misfires because of "something felt to be shameful, or degrading, or frightening." The second is when the self-knowledge fails to occur, as it is blocked by the projection of some mental state by the artist with the intention of ridding him- or herself of it (Wollheim 1993b [1979]). The lesson to be drawn from this is that retrieving the intentions for some works of art is valuable in part because of the

quality of those intentions; in other cases, the value of the work is diminished because the complex projection was in some way malformed.

Style

Wollheim's views on style have not commanded the attention garnered by some of his other views. He divided "style" into two usages, the first of which, general style, is familiar and the second of which, individual style, is not (Wollheim 1993d). General style comes in various forms. First, there are universal styles, such as classicism. Second, there are period or historical styles, such as art nouveau. Finally, there are school styles such as Giottesque, or the Norwich school. What they have in common is "some kind of shorthand for a set of characteristics which we and those who share our outlook find particularly interesting, arresting, innovatory" (Wollheim 1987: 26). Individual style, however, has psychological reality. It is the structures of the mind that cause the characteristics associated with that style. The payoff is that such a conception is valuable in understanding works of art. This follows from what was said above in terms of understanding being a matter of retrieving the intentions that terminated on the work. Works can be understood as either being in a style or not. If the latter, the work might be prestylistic or (if the artist has declined) poststylistic. In certain unfortunate cases (where an artist is confronted with a challenge they cannot meet) a work might be extrastylistic. Wollheim's notion of style might look as if it is a minor issue on the fringes of his work, but in fact it is core to his thinking. He believed that having a style is necessary for a painter to be an artist (recall, from above, that for Wollheim "art" is a highly evaluative classification) (Wollheim 1987: 26). The reasons are not hard to find; a work of art is something that stems from a certain complex background and is apt for a certain complex psychological reception. Any work that is capable of fitting that pattern will either be in, or have a relation to, a style. For Wollheim, a work of art could not be a one-off.

Modernism

Although he disavowed the label "art historian" Wollheim's work has had some influence in that discipline. The distinction, within representational painting, between nonfigurative and figurative works is clearly useful (although, due to Michael Fried, the terminology in art history is the reverse of that which Wollheim introduced; 1987: 359). He is also credited with coining the term "minimal art" (Wollheim 1973a [1965]). However, his major achievement is in rebutting a particular strand of modernist art theory. The principal theoretical text of modernism is Clement Greenberg's "Modernist Painting." Although the central claims of the paper are unclear (Greenberg having disavowed the obvious reading) it appears to claim that, if contemporary works are to stand comparison with the great works of the past, this must be through them using the properties of the support (principally the flatness of the canvas) as a vehicle for meaning (Greenberg 1961). Wollheim's

point is a simple one. In order to be relevant to the artist rather than to the house painter the injunction to "draw attention to the surface" must be the injunction to "draw attention to the surface *of a painting*" (Wollheim 1973c [1970]: 121). This is not then an instruction as to how to make paintings but an instruction – and a fairly bizarre one – within the practice of painting; all the usual constraints of producing a painting are already presupposed.

Malcolm Budd has described Wollheim as "the greatest aesthetician of his generation" (Budd 2005: 245). His influence is not only through the content of his work but through his example. His lack of respect for disciplinary boundaries is salutary; in reading Wollheim, one ceases to worry about what counts or does not count as philosophy. Although his sophistication and depth of knowledge of the arts can give his work an intimidating complexity, it is entirely appropriate to the subject matter. All too often the philosophy of art fails to prove its arguments because it fails to understand the examples it brings forward to establish them.

See also Ontology of art (Chapter 23), Value of art (Chapter 28), Interpretation (Chapter 30), Depiction (Chapter 35), Art, expression and emotion (Chapter 39), Style (Chapter 43), Painting (Chapter 57).

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Part II
AESTHETIC THEORY

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21
DEFINITIONS OF ART

Stephen Davies

Definition and its purpose

Defining can take a variety of forms: for instance, pointing to examples, enumerating all the things that fall under the term at issue, or legislating how a term will be used. One type of definition, sometimes called "essential" or "real" definition, has special power as an analytic tool. A real definition of something, X say, would identify a set of properties such that each and every X has all the properties that make up the set and only Xs have that set of properties. A real definition specifies a group of properties each of which is *necessary* for something's being an X and which, taken as a group, are also *sufficient* for something's being an X. In other words, a definition of X characterizes what all Xs and only Xs have in common. For instance, a widow is a woman who has lost her husband by death and who has not married again. In this case, there are three necessary conditions that together are sufficient for someone's being a widow.

Several points should be noticed. Sometimes a person may be able to identify and refer to Xs without being able to define what makes something an X. For instance, she might acquire a working mastery of the relevant concept as a result of being introduced to a range of typical examples. People could identify water successfully long before science revealed its essential molecular structure. And conversely, someone who knows how Xs are defined might not be able to apply that definition to settle in an uncontroversial way the status of borderline or otherwise "hard" cases, or even to identify ordinary instances. For example, I can know that a person is bald if his scalp wholly or partly lacks hair, yet not be sure of a particular man whether he is bald. Finally, it need not be the case that a thing's defining essence reveals anything about how and why it is important to us. For instance, speeding is legally defined as exceeding the maximum rate of progress specified for a given route, but this tells us nothing about why we care to set such limits.

Early definitions of art

In the past, art has been variously defined as imitation or representation (Plato 1955), as a medium for the transmission of feelings (Tolstoy 1995), as intuitive expression (Croce 1920) and as significant form (Bell 1914). Judged as essential definitions, these

are unsatisfactory. There are two ways in which a definition of art could fail: by listing a property that not all artworks possess or by identifying a set of properties that is not exclusive to artworks. The theories mentioned seem to fail on both counts. Some musical and painted artworks are abstract; they do not imitate or represent any other thing. Some artworks deliberately eschew expressiveness, while others lack significant form. Moreover, the features offered as definitional are not, after all, exclusive to artworks. Holiday snaps are imitative of the visual arrays they picture, but are not artworks. Many of the things that transmit emotion, or give intuitive expression to their creator's feelings, or display significant form, are not artworks. For instance, advertisements often succeed in communicating and arousing emotion, keening can be an intuitive expression of grief, and the order in which mileage signs follow each other displays significant form, but none of them normally count as art.

Even if they do not characterize an essence that all and only artworks display, such theories may be useful either for recommending what artworks should be like, or for isolating and drawing attention to important or valuable features of artworks or art forms.

Is the definition of art impossible?

With the failure of these traditional approaches, one might doubt that art is definable. Morris Weitz (1956) argues that artworks are united by a web of family resemblances, not by the kind of essence sought by a real definition. The problem with this claim is that everything resembles every other thing, so the invocation of resemblances cannot explain the unity and integrity of any concept. Weitz also maintains that definitions apply only to closed, unalterable concepts and that art, with its changing and unpredictable future, cannot be defined. Again, the claim is unconvincing. The class of meals I have eaten keeps growing and sometimes takes in new and unusual instances, but what alters is the class's membership, not its defining characteristics. It could be part, or a consequence, of the unchanging essence of art that many of its instances are created to be original in some respects. Weitz insists that, when we look and see, we do not find any property common to all artworks. He could be right about that, but what might follow is not that art is indefinable but, rather, that the defining properties are nonperceptible, relational ones.

If this last observation is correct, it reveals as misguided the tradition that sought to define art in terms of aesthetic properties, where these were conceived as internal, perceptible, nonrelational features.

"Cluster" theorists (Gaut 2000; Dutton 2006) have suggested that something is art if it meets a sufficient number of art-relevant criteria, none of which is necessarily satisfied by all works of art. They propose this view as antiessentialist because the theory allows that there will be very many ways different works qualify as art. Some other proponents of the view (e.g. Meskin 2007; Longworth and Scarantino 2010) see this approach as compatible with giving a disjunctive definition for art, however.

Meanwhile, "prototype" theorists also reject the search for jointly necessary and sufficient conditions, maintaining instead that a concept's instances stand to it in a

more complex, similarity-based fashion (Dean 2003). (For criticism, see Adajian 2005 and Stecker 2010.)

Definitions since the 1960s

Most definitions proposed since the 1960s identify complex relational properties as essential to art's character. One convenient classification divides recent definitions into functional and procedural ones. Functionalists argue that something is an artwork only if it succeeds in achieving the purpose for which we have art. Functionalists differ over art's purpose, but a common line suggests that its function is to provide a pleasurable aesthetic experience. By contrast, proceduralists hold that something becomes an artwork only if it is made according to the appropriate process or formula, regardless of how well it serves the purpose of art.

The following is a functionalist definition: an artwork is either an arrangement of conditions intended to be capable of affording an aesthetic experience valuable for its marked aesthetic character, or (incidentally) an arrangement belonging to a class or type of arrangement that is typically intended to have this capacity (Beardsley 1982). A more recent version of functionalism by Zangwill (2007) places the emphasis not on the aesthetic experience but on the generation of aesthetic properties as a result of the artist's insight that this could be achieved via the organization of certain nonaesthetic properties. On this account, aesthetic properties are valuable to the extent they are beautiful. (For other versions of functionalism, see Lind 1992 and Anderson 2000.)

Whereas functionalism makes the value of art central to its nature, procedural definitions are purely descriptive and nonevaluative. The most famous example is the "institutional" account offered by George Dickie. His first definition (Dickie 1974) analyzes "work of art" as (i) an artifact, (ii) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of the artworld. The social character of art is emphasized yet more in the revised definition he proposed in 1984: (i) an artist is a person who participates with understanding in the making of an artwork; (ii) a work of art is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public; (iii) a public is a set of persons the members of which are prepared in some degree to understand an object which is presented to them; (iv) the artworld is the totality of all artworld systems; and (v) an artworld system is a framework for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an artworld public. The "artworld" is the historical and social setting constituted by the changing practices and conventions of art, the heritage of works, the intentions of artists, the writings of critics and so forth. Notice that Dickie's later definition is circular, which is thought usually to be a fault in a definition, but which he regards as an accurate reflection of art's inflected nature.

Functional and procedural approaches to art's definition need not be opposed. I have characterized each in terms of a necessary condition that it regards as central, but it could be that something is an artwork only if it satisfies *both* the functional and the procedural requirements. Nevertheless, much avant-garde art that does not seek the generation of pleasing aesthetic effects forces functionalism and proceduralism

apart. Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades, for instance, challenge deeply rooted assumptions about art's nature and purpose. Nevertheless, they satisfy the "institutional" requirements for arthood: they are created by an established artist, presented along with other artworks and discussed by art historians.

Functionalism faces these objections: it is difficult to find any single or pervasive function that is potentially served by all artworks. And if all artworks must be functionally successful, it is difficult to account for very bad art. Also, the theory tends to be conservative in dismissing from the realm of art some philosophically stimulating recent works, many of which are widely accepted as art even if they challenge what was thought to be foundational or valuable about their predecessors. Moreover, functionalism does not readily encompass works with social, ritual or didactic functions, as against aesthetic ones, as is so for much non-Western and popular art.

Proceduralism faces these criticisms: not all artworlds are sufficiently institutionalized to generate a structure of roles and authorities that could explain how the status of art is conferred. And it is not clear that the social practices of art-making are distinctive enough to reveal what distinguishes artworks from the products of outwardly similar cultural activities. Moreover, proceduralists have difficulty in acknowledging the artworks of isolated artists and of those who operate outside the ambit of the artworld, such as embroiderers.

Historical definitions

Arthur C. Danto (1973) has argued that a piece cannot become art unless there is a place prepared for it within the artworld in consequence of the prior history of art production, both generally and by the given artist. Picasso could make an artwork by painting his tie, but earlier artists could not. Observations like Danto's have made philosophers aware of the dependence of a work's art status on the art-historical context in which it is created and presented. In turn, this has led to definitions that regard the process by which art's history unfolds as part of art's defining character.

Historical definitions can be reflexive, taking a recursive form: something is an artwork only if it stands in the appropriate relation to its artistic forebears. For completeness, any definition of this form should be supplemented by an account of how the chronologically first artworks became such. I have argued (Davies 2007: ch. 5) that it is not convincing to maintain that first art could be stipulated as such (as Levinson did in 1979) or that it attains the status of art retroactively (as suggested by Carney 1994). It is more plausible to suppose that it is in terms of their functionality that the first pieces qualify as art, and that the relevant function concerns aesthetic features and the pleasure we take in them, rather than (as maintained in Carroll 2001: pt 2) in the complex and subtle features of representation, expression and communication that become prominent in later artworks.

When it comes to the defining relation in which art now stands to art past, most theorists agree that it can display these various forms: reference, repetition, amplification or repudiation. They differ over the content of the defining relation, however. According to Jerrold Levinson (1979, 1989, 1993, 2002), something is art if it is

intended for regard in one of the ways in which prior artworks have correctly been regarded. He allows that something intended for a particular regard would be art in the case where that regard was invited by earlier artworks although the intender was not aware of this fact. James D. Carney (199la, 1991b, 1994) holds that it is in terms of its style that the present candidate is united with prior artworks. For Carney, artistic style includes schema for conveying content, as well as characteristic choices of subject matter, materials and approaches. Noël Carroll (2001: pt 2) sees the link between the present piece and past art as residing in a narrative that encompasses the two. This narrative must be accurate, must explain later events as generated out of earlier ones, and must track the adoption of a series of actions and alternatives as appropriate means to an end on the part of a person who arrived at an intelligible assessment of the art-historical context in such a way that he or she resolved to change it in accordance with recognizable and live purposes of the practice. Though Carroll denies that his proposal is a definition, I treat it as one here because it has the same general structure and function as the definitions offered as such by Levinson and Carney.

Each of these theories has been criticized and defended. (For example, see Davies 1991; Stecker 1997; Dickie 1997; Stock 2003; Currie 2010.) Rather than debating the detail of individual definitions, I draw attention to a difficulty, which I call "the artworld relativity problem," faced by this general approach. It presupposes the existence of a continuous tradition – that is, of an historically and culturally unified body of work – to which the newly created piece is related in the appropriate fashion. In other words, theories of this kind make art relative to an artworld. But there is more than one artworld, more than one tradition of making artworks. There may be as many independently generated artworlds as there are distinct cultures producing their own artworks. Most historically reflexive theories are too parochial in that they proceed as if there is only one artworld, by focusing narrowly on the Western context in which "high" art is made while ignoring "low" art and non-Western art.

Alternatively, if the theory acknowledges that there are several artworlds, then it is exposed as incomplete. When it is generalized, the theory has this form: what makes something an artwork is that the appropriate relation holds between it and prior works created within the same artworld, whether it is the Western "high" artworld or the artworld of some African tribe within which the artist operates, and even if that relation is realized or satisfied differently in distinct artworlds at a given time. When characterizing the nature of artworlds, the theories can draw attention to the general pattern of relations they share in common, but not to the detail of the *relata* – the intended regards, styles or unifying narratives – that generate this pattern, since these details differ from artworld to artworld. It is obvious, though, that their historically reflexive character is not distinctive to artworlds. Many practices that are not art-making ones are historically reflexive in similar ways and thereby exhibit the same abstract form. So, when treated as nonparochial, the theories are incomplete because they do not spell out criteria for distinguishing artworlds from other social arrangements displaying similar general structures of relations.

The artworld relativity problem would not arise if there were only one artworld, that of the West. And it has been argued that our current concept of art emerged only in eighteenth-century Europe (Shiner 2001). According to this view, art is not

found prior to the eighteenth century or beyond the West. Yet the understanding of art that first appeared in the eighteenth century – namely, art is to be contemplated for the sake of its aesthetic properties, these being purely perceptual and available to the person with taste, whether or not she knows anything about the production of the work in question, the practices it assumed as background and the art-historical tradition to which it belongs – has been challenged as inadequate in the second half of the twentieth century. And it is undeniable that other times and cultures have music, mime, storytelling, painting, dancing and the like. If we take an appropriately broad view of art, we can see that the Western concept of "high" art is only one species within the genus (Dissanayake 1988; Moravcsik 1988; Dutton 2000; Davies 2006; Davies 2007: ch. 4 – for critical discussion, see Shiner 2003). Other species might include religious, decorative, folk, domestic, popular and mass art.

There are several lessons to take from this debate. Until we have some idea of the concept's scope, we will not be well placed to evaluate proposed definitions. As just indicated, it seems reasonable to believe the concept that needs to be defined is broad rather than narrow. Second, most of the definitions on offer make no attempt to accommodate non-Western and "low" art. Because no attempt is made to defend this approach – for example, by arguing that the concept is peculiar to the West – this dereliction is difficult to explain.

Arts versus art?

The observation that all cultures possess music, dancing, picturing, and so on, suggests an approach to definition that would avoid the artworld relativity problem. We might rather define the art forms, with art as what falls within them (Lopes 2008). Against this view, it is not plain that all artworks fall under an art form or that all that fall under any art form are artworks, and there is the issue of accounting for the manner in which new art forms acquire their status as such (Davies 2008; Meskin 2008).

Hybrid definitions

I observed earlier that functionalism and proceduralism need not be exclusive. Also, either approach might be combined with historical reflexiveness. For instance, it could be held that art is functional and that the function of art changes through time, depending on how it has been realized in the past. Or it could be claimed that the procedures through which artworks gain their standing are themselves subject to historical forces internal to the artworld. When these various approaches are combined, I call the resulting definitions "hybrids." The idea is that hybrid definitions will be superior, because they can combine the advantages of several theoretical perspectives while avoiding the weaknesses that plague each taken in isolation.

Arthur Danto (1997: 195) has suggested that a work of art is to be (i) about something, and (ii) to embody its meaning. He doubts that these necessary conditions are jointly sufficient. Additional conditions have been intimated in other of Danto's writings (for instance, Danto 1981). Carroll (1993) sums up Danto's theory as follows:

something is a work of art if and only if it has a subject about which it projects some attitude or point of view (has a style) by means of rhetorical ellipsis (generally metaphorical), which ellipsis, in turn, engages audience participation in filling in what is missing (interpretation). In Carroll's account, the first condition corresponds to the requirement that the work be about something, and the others explain what is meant by the idea that the work is to embody the meaning of what it is about. A further constraint present in Danto's writing from 1964 is that the work in question and the interpretations thereof require an art-historical context.

This account displays elements of functionalism, proceduralism and historical reflexivity. It suggests that the artwork has the purpose of engaging the audience in an interpretation of the subject that the work is about. Moreover, in invoking its art-historical setting as among the determinants of the work's identity, Danto (1986) refers to the structure and roles of the artworld as well as to art's historical evolution.

The major criticisms of Danto's theory have challenged his claim that artworks necessarily are *about* something (see Beardsley 1982) and his methodological assumptions. The first is that every artwork could be perceptually indistinguishable from "a mere real thing," which he uses to motivate his rejection of the traditional view, according to which art is marked by perceptible features of a distinctively aesthetic kind. The second is that every artwork could perceptually indistinguishable from a different artwork, which he uses to attack the institutional theory according to which otherwise identical items, both of which have achieved art status, have the same aesthetic content. (For clarification and critical discussion of Danto's methodological assumptions, see Fisher 1995.) One might also question whether all art is meant to elicit interpreting and, if so, if such interpretations must be constrained, as Danto maintains, by what was intended by the artist.

Another hybrid definition is defended by Robert Stecker (1997). He maintains that an item is an artwork if and only if it is in one of the central art forms at the time of its creation and is intended to fulfill a function art has at that time, or it is an artifact that achieves excellence in fulfilling such a function. Though it is primarily functional, this definition agrees with the proceduralist's claim that something can be art without fulfilling one of art's functions; for works produced in central art forms, such as poetry, painting and music, the intention to fulfill is sufficient. The historically reflexive aspect of the theory lies in its treatment of art's functions, which are said to evolve in an open-ended fashion so that there will be resemblance rather than identity between the valuable functions of art in one period and those in another. That is, art of the present relates to art of the past in terms of the historical connectedness of the (changing) functions they serve, or are intended to serve. Meanwhile, Stecker dissociates his own view from some elements that went along with traditional versions of functionalism. The more significant functions of art are experience-causing ones, but the relevant experiences may be cognitive, or emotion centered, or interpretation centered, not solely aesthetic. Moreover, he denies both that aesthetic experience must be founded solely on perception and that it must be "disinterested." He does not think that only *sensuous* features of artworks are relevant to their power to provide aesthetic experience, and he allows that an interest in an item's practical utility could be compatible with a concern with its art-relevant features.

Stecker's brand of functionalism inevitably invites some new questions. Though it surely is an improvement to recognize that the function of art is not singular and unchanging, the more functions one countenances and the more malleable they are, the harder it is to believe that the (intended) purposes of art are distinctive of it.

Apart from defending his own definition, Stecker (2000) has argued that all plausible definitions should be hybrid. Since art has no unchanging function or form, functionalist definitions must acknowledge art's historicity. Yet, reference to art's function is ineliminable from accounts of the arthood of the first works, since these lacked artistic predecessors and institutional settings. And the importance of artworld institutions and practices must be granted in order to explain how items can become art, either through their appropriation by artworld members or by falling squarely within established art genres, when they are otherwise without artistic merit.

Artworld relativity again

Whatever their other advantages, the hybrid definitions just mentioned fail to escape the artworld relativity problem that was described earlier. Any theory that makes arthood depend on historical reflexivity within a given artworld, while allowing (as it should) that there are different artworlds each with its own history, fails to complete its analysis satisfactorily if it does not analyze the nature of artworlds.

The artworld relativity problem also arises for Dickie's institutional theory, though his definition is not historically reflexive. He defends the ahistoricism of his theory by observing that it can accept and explain the importance of art's history while denying that that historic pattern or process contributes to art's essential nature (Dickie 1997). For him, the crucial relation is between the candidate piece and the artworld's institutional structure, not between the candidate piece and the artworld's historical development. Nevertheless, his definition does make art relative to an artworld, and it leaves him with the problem of distinguishing artworlds from other social institutions. It is implausible to think that all and only artworlds exhibit a particular social structure, but, if art is itself artworld relative, there must be something common to artworlds beyond the fact that their products are artworks.

Not all definitions are subject to the objection. A theory, such as pure functionalism, that does not make art depend for its nature on its connection to an artworld can avoid it. On the face of it, though, such views are unattractive for they imply what seems obviously to be false: that any artwork would have been such wherever and whenever it was created. And as soon as one allows that a thing's capacity for fulfilling the function or functions of art depends on the social structure of the context in which it is made and presented, or on the kinds of pieces that have been accepted as art in the past, the problem returns.

By drawing attention to the ubiquity of the artworld relativity problem I do not mean to imply that the enterprise of defining art is bound to fail. The point, rather, is that progress in analyzing art's nature is likely to demand of philosophers closer attention to the wider social setting in which art is produced and received, and a greater sensitivity to the variety of such settings, many of which fall outside the ambit of the artworld of "high" Western art.

See also Formalism (Chapter 9), Expressivism (Chapter 11), Aesthetic universals (Chapter 26), High art versus low art (Chapter 46).

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22
CATEGORIES OF ART

David Davies

I

A category in the most general sense is a principle for grouping things, a way in which particulars can be brought under a universal. The categorization of things operates hierarchically in that we may ask how things belonging to a given category are themselves to be categorized. But philosophers, following in the tradition of Immanuel Kant (1929) whose "categories" were fundamental principles for the understanding of the experienced world, tend to be more selective in applying the label "category." To characterize a way of grouping *x*s as a *category* of *x*s is to ascribe some significance to this way of grouping for our understanding of, or practical engagement with, such things. Furthermore, what we take to be significant ways of grouping *x*s depends in part upon our more general ways of categorizing things, and how, relative to these more general categories, we classify *x*s themselves. In general, the differences and the similarities between things that we mark in our classifications reflect the various purposes that we have in our theoretical and practical commerce with the world. Some of those classifications are attempts to, as it is sometimes said, "carve the world at its joints," to capture, in our classifications, ways of grouping things that accord with natural processes whereby the experienced world exhibits the features that it does. The notion of a "natural kind" is central to this conception of significant classification – and thus of categorization – for the purposes of natural science. A natural kind groups things in ways that, it is assumed, find expression in powerful empirical generalizations that hold of things so grouped. It is because we take there to be powerful true empirical generalizations applicable to all and only samples of gold, for example, but not to all and only the stones to be found in a given stretch of river, that we take gold, but not such stones, to be a natural kind.

It makes sense to think in these terms about significant ways of grouping things when those things are taken to be part of a natural order whose features do not depend in any essential way upon our practices, interests and purposes. The interest that leads us to seek out natural kinds is precisely an interest in understanding and being able to predict the behavior of things taken to be independent of us in this sense. But other things that we seek to categorize do depend for their features upon us, and our principles of grouping reflect this fact. For example, we group some things by reference to purposes that we ourselves confer upon them through our creative intentions and our uses of them. Such principles govern *artifactual* kinds

like "chair" or "table." It is in virtue of something's intended or actual function that it falls into such a category.

Artworks, like tables and chairs, are artifacts, and our ways of grouping them reflect our practices and interests rather than "joints" in nature that we take such groupings to register. Our classification of certain artifacts as artworks, and our subclassifications of those artifacts as artworks of particular kinds, are ultimately accountable to our practices rather than to practice-independent facts about the world (see Davies 2004: ch. 1; Thomasson 2005). Nonetheless, some ways of grouping artworks seem more basic in that they capture something more significant about those works and the practices in which they figure, and thereby promise to sustain more interesting generalizations about, or insights into, those works and practices. It is such groupings that most obviously merit the label "categories of art." This is evident if we consider what seem, on reflection, to be less basic ways of grouping artworks, such as " street art," "outsider art," "child art," "tribal art" and "pornographic art." The things that are rightly grouped under such labels seem to differ significantly from one another *as artworks*. "Outsider art," for example, groups together paintings, drawings, texts, large installations, quilts and sculptures made up of constructions out of bottles, inter alia. We find a similar diversity among the things classified under the other labels just listed.

In saying that the things comprised by such groupings differ "as artworks," we are taking as given another way of grouping and differentiating artworks. A natural way of putting this is to say that, in distinguishing between paintings, drawings and sculptures, for example, we are grouping artworks according to their *medium*. It is these groupings that are most naturally thought of as the basic *categories* of art that bear more fundamentally than the other principles of grouping just canvassed upon our understanding of things as artworks. But if we are to sustain this intuition, we need to answer at least the following questions: (1) What is a "medium" in the sense that bears upon such groupings? (2) Why should we take classification of artworks in terms of their mediums to be more fundamental than the other ways of grouping artworks just cited – why, in other words, does the grouping of artworks according to medium matter for our understanding of them as artworks? (3) What is it for a given artwork to belong to a particular medium? (4) Can there be artworks that are *not* in a particular medium, and that therefore fail to fall within a category of art so conceived, or artworks that belong to more than one such category of art, or "basic" categories of art, so conceived, that comprise more than one medium?

II

We speak of a medium in a variety of contexts where we want to describe something that serves as a means, or instrument, whereby a signal or content is transmitted from a source to a receiver. The function of a medium, so construed, is *mediation*. It is in this sense that we speak of the press and the Internet as news media that bring us tidings of events in the world, and of air and water as physical media whereby acoustic signals from distant events are transmitted to our ears to be transduced into sounds. A medium in the arts, then, is presumably a means whereby an artist

communicates, or endeavors to communicate, what we may term an "artistic content" to receivers. "Artistic content" here includes whatever representational, expressive, formal or more generally exemplificational properties an artist succeeds in articulating through a given work.

But we must distinguish between what may be termed a work's *physical*, or more broadly *vehicular*, medium and its *artistic* medium. An artist aims to articulate a particular artistic content by means of what we can think of as an *artistic vehicle*. In the case of a painting, for example, the vehicle is a visual array that may be displayed on the wall of a gallery, while in the case of a solo dance performance it is a sequence of movements executed by a dancer. But we may avail ourselves of different vocabularies in describing this vehicle. Described in terms of its *vehicular medium*, a painting is a surface with a certain material constitution – a canvas, for example – upon which various marks, such as dried residues of oil paint, can be visually discriminated. Here we abstract from any intentional activity that might explain the overall disposition of marks upon the surface. The very same description could apply to a marked surface produced by various natural processes. Similarly, described in terms of its vehicular medium, a dance performance is a sequence of bodily movements. A work's vehicular medium, then, is the kind of "stuff" that the artist manipulates. While this is sometimes called a work's "physical medium," we need a term that can apply even when, as in the case of a musical work, a literary work or a work of conceptual art, it isn't obvious that it makes sense to think of its vehicle as something physical.

There is good reason, however, to resist an identification of media in art with the kinds of stuff manipulated by artists, given our general instrumental conception of a medium. For we require a further mediating force to explain how such stuff, once manipulated, can succeed in articulating an artistic content. Applying pigment to a canvas, for example, produces a pigment-covered canvas, yet we take the painter to have represented a certain subject or expressed or exemplified certain qualities in the painting. We thus need another kind of medium to mediate between what the artist produces characterized in terms of a vehicular medium, and what the artist achieves artistically. This is partly reflected in the language that we ordinarily use in talking about artistic vehicles. When we describe the artistic vehicle of a work of visual art, for example, we normally employ expressions that implicate the intentional agency we take to have been involved in its coming to display a particular disposition of marks. We talk, for example, of "brushstrokes" or "impasto" rather than of marks on a canvas, and of "design" rather than pattern, thereby describing the manifold in terms that posit a process of intentional making. And, in describing a dance performance, we talk of what Monroe Beardsley (1982) termed "movings and posings" rather than of bodily movements.

A number of philosophers have insisted on the importance of distinguishing between a work's vehicular medium and its "artistic medium" understood in this way. (See e.g. Margolis 1980: 41–42; Danto 1981: 159; Beardsley 1982; Levinson 1984; Wollheim 1987: ch. 1; Davies 2004: ch. 3.) They urge, for example, that we think of an artwork as made up of elements "informed by the purposiveness of the entire work" (Margolis 1980: 41–42; cf. Levinson 1984: §1). The artist characteristically works *in* a particular artistic medium when *working* a vehicular medium. To think of

a painting as in an artistic medium in this sense is to relate its perceptible properties to the agency of a maker whose purposeful manipulation of the vehicular medium is the source of those properties. It is through its visible surface apprehended in terms of brushstrokes and design that we relate the artistic vehicle of a visual artwork to an artistic content that it articulates. It is brushstrokes, not marks on a canvas, that articulate particular representational, expressive or formal properties of the painting.

But to see such properties articulated in an artistic manifold also requires some understanding as to the *significance* of the manifold's constitutive elements understood as the result of intentional manipulation of a vehicular medium. In Renaissance theater, for example, particular intentional movements on the part of the actors can be ascribed determinate meanings by reference to shared understandings that partly constituted the practices in which such works were initiated (Baxandall 1988: 70–72). These understandings are also often referred to as an artistic medium. Timothy Binkley (1977), for example, describes an artistic medium as a set of conventions whereby performing certain manipulations on a kind of physical stuff counts as articulating a particular artistic content, and the philosophers cited in the previous paragraph also sometimes have this in mind when they talk of artistic media.

The notion of an artistic medium is thus used in two closely related senses, to refer not only to the elements that make up an artistic manifold conceived as the product of intentional agency, but also in a broader sense to characterize the shared understandings according to which the results of such intentional manipulations of the vehicular medium are to be apprehended in the ascription of artistic content to the work. It will be helpful here to distinguish between (1) an artistic medium "in the agential sense" – as, for example, in our use of terms like "brushstroke" and "design" in describing the artistic vehicle of a painting – and (2) an artistic medium "in the articulatory sense" – the shared understandings in virtue of which those brushstrokes can be seen as articulating certain specific representational or expressive properties. I take it that both of these elements are comprised by the notion of artistic practice to which Dominic Lopes appeals in defining an art medium as "a set of practices for working with some materials, whether physical, as in sculpture, or symbolic, as in literature" (Lopes 2004: 110).

When we categorize artworks by reference to their medium – as paintings or oil paintings or novels or photographs, for example – this always involves an artistic medium in one or both of the preceding senses. A vehicular medium is involved in such categorizations only indirectly, in that an artistic medium in the agential sense is a way of characterizing the results of manipulating a *particular* kind of vehicular medium. While a painting, for example, is not *just* a surface covered with pigment, it *is* something with a pigmented surface which is properly described in terms of the agency that has produced that particular arrangement of pigment. Similarly, a literary artwork comprises linguistic entities, but such linguistic entities must be conceived as ordered through the agency of an author in the interests of articulating an artistic content. A dance performance comprises physical movements but such movements are to be understood as sequences of intentional movings and pauses.

It might be thought that a medium-based category of art like painting can be defined purely in terms of something's being in an artistic medium in a purely agential sense – that is to say, in terms of that thing's being describable in ways that

make essential reference to an intentional act of applying some pigment-bearing material to a surface with the aim of articulating an artistic content in virtue of shared understandings. In virtue of being in an artistic medium in this sense, the physical marks on the painted surface are rightly apprehended as brushstrokes or as impasto or as manifesting a particular design. The particular shared understandings assumed by the artist, on the other hand – the artistic medium in the articulatory sense – might be thought to enter not into a characterization of what it is for something to be a painting, but only into a characterization of what it is to be a particular kind of painting – for example, an Impressionist or cubist painting. We might think that the same applies to other general medium-based categories of art. Photographic art, literary art, music, theater and dance, it might be thought, can be characterized in terms of being in an artistic medium in the agential sense, and subcategories of such artworks can then be distinguished by reference to artistic media in the articulatory sense.

There are two problems with such a view, however. A less serious worry is that some medium-based subcategories of art are differentiated not by the shared understandings in terms of which they articulate their contents, as in the case of cubist painting, but by the specific nature of the vehicular medium manipulated by the artist. Categories of art such as "oil painting" and "analogue photography" further specify the nature of the vehicular medium that has been put to artistic use, rather than alluding to shared understandings of the articulatory roles played by intentional manipulations of this medium.

A more serious problem, however, is that even general categorizations of works, as paintings or as dance works for example, make essential reference to shared understandings as to how the result of the artist's activity is to articulate its content. This is the principal lesson we are invited to draw from a famous paper by Kendall Walton (1970) that introduced the notion of "categories of art" into broader philosophical parlance. Walton's primary aim was to argue for the bearing of facts about an artwork's history of making on its appreciation as a work of art. The target, here, is the "empiricist" view that only a work's "manifest" properties – those properties given to a receiver in a perceptual encounter with an instance of the work uninformed by knowledge of its history of making – can bear upon its proper appreciation (see e.g. Bell 1914; Beardsley 1958 – for criticism of this view, see Currie 1989: ch. 2; Davies 2004: ch. 2). We can distinguish here between "narrowly" and "broadly" manifest properties of an instance of a work. The narrowly manifest properties comprise those properties of the artistic vehicle characterizable in terms of either its vehicular medium or its artistic medium in the agential sense – the distribution of pigment on canvas or the organization of brushstrokes, for example, in the case of a painting. The broadly manifest properties are those aspects of a work's artistic content that a suitably sensitive viewer can apprehend in perceptually engaging with its narrowly manifest properties – those representational, expressive or formal properties accessible in such a perceptual engagement. Among a work's broadly manifest properties might be that it depicts a horse, that it is serene or that it is balanced. The empiricist maintains that, given the sensitivity of the receiver, a work's narrowly manifest properties uniquely determine its broadly manifest properties, and thereby its properly appreciable properties. Thus the only knowledge of a

work's history of making that bears upon its proper appreciation is knowledge that it *has* a history of making – that it is an artifact – and can therefore be subsumed under an artistic medium in the agential sense.

Walton argues that the broadly manifest artistic content of a work is not uniquely determined in this way. Which appreciable properties we perceive a work as having in experiencing the narrowly manifest properties of an instance of the work depends upon what *kind* of work we take it to be, something that is not itself manifest. Perceiving something *as* an artwork, Walton maintains, requires that we perceive it as belonging to a particular artistic category. Furthermore, which appreciable properties we ascribe to a work depends upon the particular category of art under which it is apprehended. Waltonian categories of art, as we may term them for the moment, are defined in terms of three kinds of features: those that are *standard* or taken to be required for membership in the category, those that are *contra-standard*, taken to be incompatible, prima facie, with membership in the category, and those that are *variable*, taken to count neither for nor against membership in the category. For example, being two dimensional and having a picture plane are standard, having moving parts is contra-standard, and being representational is variable for works belonging to the Waltonian category "painting." The aesthetic properties we experience a work as having depend, not merely upon our sensitive response to its narrowly manifest properties, but also upon whether those properties are standard, contra-standard or variable for the Waltonian category of art under which we apprehend it. Two artworks whose instances have identical narrowly manifest properties might articulate different artistic contents if apprehended under different Waltonian artistic categories.

Walton defends this view by asking us to consider a range of hypothetical cases. In the most cited such case, he invites us to imagine a culture with a Waltonian category of artworks called "guernicas." What is standard for a guernica is that, when viewed at right angles to its frame, it has the pictorial properties of Picasso's painting of that name. What is variable includes the topology of the work, guernicas being understood to be three-dimensional, bas-relief-like entities whose artistic value depends crucially upon their topological features. An object possessing the narrowly manifest properties of Picasso's work, while highly valued as a painting, would presumably be quite uninteresting as a guernica. Or, if it *were* an interesting work qua guernica, this would rest upon entirely different considerations from the ones that ground the interest and value of Picasso's work as a painting. As Walton notes, the flatness that is standard for paintings is a variable for guernicas, while the figures on the surface are variable for paintings but standard for guernicas. This will result in profound differences in aesthetic responses between those who perceive Picasso's creation as a painting and those who perceive it as a guernica. Perceived as a painting, "it seems violent, dynamic, vital, disturbing" but perceived as a guernica it might seem "cold, stark, lifeless, or serene and restful, or perhaps, bland, dull, boring – but, in any case, *not* violent, dynamic, and vital" (Walton 1970: 205).

We can bring the claim that painting is a Waltonian category to bear upon our current concern about whether general medium-based categories of art can be defined purely in terms of an artistic medium understood in the agential sense. What the guernica thought experiment demonstrates is that when we classify something as a

painting we are not merely saying that it is the result of the intentional application of pigment to a surface in the interests of articulating an artistic content in virtue of some shared understandings or other. Rather, we are also saying that, in order to grasp the work's artistic content, the properties resulting from the artist's activity must be perceived in terms of an artistic practice that classifies certain properties as standard and others as variable. This allows Walton to further claim that to perceive something as falling into a subcategory of artworks – such as cubist paintings – is to make more refined classifications of manifest properties of the artistic manifold as standard, contra-standard or variable. Indeed, he maintains, it is only in these terms that we can explain our ability to see a flat painted surface as having a particular representational content.

We can find support for Walton's claims in other aspects of our commerce with artworks if we generalize his talk about "standard" and "variable" narrowly manifest features of the artistic manifold generated by an artist to the more general idea that narrowly manifest features can be accorded different *saliences*. The difference between poetry and prose, for example, cannot be expressed purely in terms of the intentional manipulation of a particular vehicular medium, since they share the vehicular medium of language. They differ, rather, in the salience that the receiver, apprehending a verbal manifold under one or other of these categories, ascribes to various properties of that manifold. This is particularly clear in the case of so-called "prose poems," or passages in poems that are syntactically and linguistically identical to ordinary prose (e.g. the "pub" sequence in T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land"). The difference between reading something as prose and reading it as poetry is a difference in the kinds of properties of the verbal vehicle to which we attend in our attempts to grasp the artistic content articulated through those properties – in the case of poetry, prosodic features, the syntactic dislocation of which the formalists spoke, certain "figures" of speech, metaphor, ambiguity, etc. Similar considerations apply to late modern artworks that involve bodily movement on the part of the artist. In apprehending the resulting manifold either as a work of dance or as a work of performance art or as a conceptual piece, the viewer ascribes different saliences to various manifest features of the manifold (see Davies 2007). Or, taking a different example, if we apprehend Duchamp's *Fountain* as a work of sculpture, then we will attend to the precise shape and visible appearance of the exhibited object in ascribing artistic content to the work. If, on the other hand, we take the object to be merely a prop in a performance, the appearance of the object will be accorded no such significance.

III

Walton's argument rests upon the assumption that to appreciate an artwork on the basis of an experiential engagement with an artistic manifold always requires that we perceive that manifold under a medium-based artistic category, whether general or more specific, whereby the experienced features of the manifold are accorded a particular status or salience. But if an artistic manifold allows of being perceived under different categories of art so construed, are some ways of so perceiving it *correct* and others incorrect? Walton, we shall see, answers this question affirmatively.

But Brian Laetz (2010) has argued that this does not mean, as most commentators have assumed, that Walton also believes that artworks belong only to those categories under which their artistic manifolds are correctly perceived. Walton, Laetz maintains, limits his discussion to "perceptually distinguishable" categories of art – categories the membership of which depends upon narrowly manifest properties alone. A work like Picasso's *Guernica*, then, in virtue of its narrowly manifest properties, is, for Walton, both a painting and a guernica, although it is only those properties that it can be seen as having when perceived as a painting that belong to it as an artwork.

Walton lists four kinds of considerations that might be thought to determine the correctness of perceiving a work as belonging to a particular category of art C: (1) the work's fitting C – that is, its having a large number of those features that are standard for C; (2) the work's being a better work when perceived as falling under C than it would be when perceived as falling under any other category C*; (3) the artist's having intended or expected that the work be perceived under C; (4) C*'s* being well-established and recognized in the artistic context in which the artwork originates. He argues that while all of these factors may play a part in our decision that a work is correctly perceived in a given category of art, the third consideration, while not always determinative, is the most important. An artist's clear intention that a work be perceived as falling under C can overrule contrary evidence deriving from the other three criteria of correctness as long as the artist succeeds in producing something that can be so perceived. For example, we generally assume that a work is rightly perceived as belonging to a category having currency in its community of origin, but this can be overruled if the artist is clearly intending to establish a new category, as in the case of Schoenberg's earliest twelve-tone compositions. The other three considerations seem best viewed as playing an evidential rather than a constitutive role, although, where an artist's intentions seem unclear or confused, or when they are unknown, Walton holds that we may accord them a deciding role in our judgments as to correct categorization.

However, we might insist that even in such cases it is a correct account of the artist's generative activity – not necessarily reflected in her self-conscious pronouncements – that determines correct categorization, the other considerations never playing more than an evidential role. We might take an artist's "categorial intention" – her intention that her work be perceived as falling under a certain category of art – to be expressed in her treating something as the work's artistic vehicle, that is, as the means through which the intended artistic content is to be articulated. Something is then a work of *x*-art, where "*x*" designates an artistic medium, just in case an *x*-manifold or structure serves as the *artistic vehicle* for the work in this sense. Note that this differs from Walton's approach as articulated by Laetz (see above), in that it does not take medium-based categories of art to be "perceptually distinguishable," but to depend upon the articulatory intentions of the artist. On this approach, Picasso's *Guernica* and a perceptually indistinguishable guernica belong to different artistic categories because they have different artistic vehicles. To ask under which category a work is correctly perceived is, then, to ask which properties of the perceptible manifold produced by the artist are supposed to serve as its artistic vehicle.

It is in such terms that we can distinguish between works of literary art and non-literary works that nonetheless incorporate linguistic elements – for example, the

artworks of Fiona Banner, whose visual arrays consist entirely of texts painted on a white surface. It is because the resulting visual array or the performance of generating it, rather than the text itself, is intended to serve as the artistic vehicle for such works that they are rightly viewed as works of visual or conceptual art rather than as works of literary art. Consider too the categorization of works that incorporate photographic images. A work of photographic art is an artwork for which a photograph – that is, a trace produced in some appropriate manner by a process of "writing with light" – serves as the artistic vehicle. For it to serve as an artistic vehicle, however, it must be describable in terms of an artistic medium in the agential sense. Thus it must be viewed as an *intentionally rendered* trace. But many contemporary works of art incorporate photographs without meeting these requirements for being photographic art – for example, works in which the artist eschews agency in the generation of the image, or where the image is not itself the artistic vehicle but serves as documentation for a work of performance art or a conceptual work.

This also provides us with a principled way of thinking about so-called "hybrid art forms" (Levinson 1984), such as opera, sound cinema and song. Works in such art forms seem to combine different artistic media in a common purpose. A number of authors have considered the status of such works and the conditions under which they can be successful (Arnheim 1964 [1938]; Levinson 1984; Davies forthcoming). But thinking about distinct medium-based categories of art in terms of the nature of their artistic vehicles lends itself easily to an extension to such categories of works. In such cases, the artistic vehicle incorporates distinct artistic media that are intended to collaborate in the articulation of a single artistic content.

IV

If Walton is right in thinking that the proper appreciation of an artwork requires that the artistic manifold produced by the artist be perceived under a correct medium-based category of art, then it is clear why it is medium-based categories that bear most crucially on our understanding of artworks and that are therefore most deserving of the label "categories of art." Indeed, if a work's artistic content is the content that it is perceived to have when correctly perceived under a medium-based category of art, then it is also clear why there can be no artworks that do not fall under such a category. For it is only by relying upon the receiver's ability to perceive an artistic manifold under a medium-based category of art that an artist can have any hope of articulating a determinate content through that manifold, and thus meet the requirements for having a genuine intention to so articulate such a content (Davidson 1986).

Furthermore, if we assume that an artist generally intends (in the practical sense characterized above) that her work be perceived under one particular medium-based category of art at a given level – for example, as a painting rather than as a guernica – then it is will also generally be the case that works belong to (or, for Walton, are correctly perceived as belonging to) one and only one such category. Walton suggests that in certain circumstances we might conclude that two different medium-based categories at a given level provide equally correct ways of perceiving a given

artistic manifold, but this conclusion seems to depend upon allowing the three non-intentional criteria of correctness to sometimes play a genuine constitutive rather than a merely evidential role. But we might also consider a situation in which an artist actually intends that the artistic manifold she is producing be apprehended under two distinct medium-based categories of art. If successful in this intention, she would produce a single artistic manifold that serves as two distinct artistic vehicles (because different sets of properties of the manifold are intended to play articulatory roles) and articulates two different artistic contents. In such a case, it might be better to say not that we have a single artwork correctly perceived under two distinct medium-based categories at the same level, but that we have two distinct artworks generated through the same intentional manipulation of a medium.

How, then, in light of the foregoing, should our categories of art themselves be categorized? Our basic categories group artworks by reference to the artistic media, in both an agential and an articulatory sense, under which their artistic vehicles are rightly classified. Basic categories themselves include:

(i) general categories of art defined in terms of a single artistic medium such as painting, dance and photography;
(ii) general categories of art that combine distinct artistic media, such as opera and theater;
(iii) subcategories of these general categories defined in terms of their distinctive vehicular media, such as oil painting and digital photography; and
(iv) subcategories of general categories defined in terms of their distinctive artistic media in the articulatory sense, such as Impressionist or cubist painting or Noh theater.

Nonbasic categories of art, on the other hand, group works not in terms of their artistic media but in terms of other variables such as their intended functions (religious art, political art and pornographic art in one sense of these terms), the nature of their artistic contents (religious art, political art and pornographic art in another sense) and the social or personal circumstances of those whose agency is productive of the work (child art, animal art, aboriginal art and outsider art).

See also Definitions of art (Chapter 21), Ontology of art (Chapter 23), Style (Chapter 43).

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23
ONTOLOGY OF ART

Guy Rohrbaugh

Ontology is the study of what exists and the nature of the fundamental categories into which those existents fall. Ontologists offer a map of reality, one divided into such broad, overlapping territories as physical and mental, concrete and abstract, universal and particular. Such a map provides the setting for further philosophical investigation. Ontologists of art seek to locate works of art in this wider terrain, to say where in our universe they fit. Their governing question is "What kind of thing is a work of art?"

Methodological constraints

The question looks particularly challenging, for the category of artworks is wildly heterogeneous. It includes paintings, poetry, dances, buildings, pop songs, earthworks, novels, plays, installations, musical improvisations, films and much more besides. On its face, art is not itself an ontological category, but a status enjoyed by a host of things of different sorts. Those who propose definitions of "art" attempt to clarify this status, but none suggest that art is a category of existence. Even so, the ontologist's categories are themselves quite diverse. Atoms, skyscrapers and legislatures are all particulars; murders, picnics and victories are all events. There remain patterns of high-level commonality among artworks on the basis of which we might assign them to a few, even just one or two, categories.

How does one go about answering such questions? Ontologists of art have largely adopted a pragmatic picture of ontology, rooted in a tradition running prominently through Carnap, Quine and Lewis. On this picture, articulated forcefully by David Davies (2004), answers to such questions are constrained by the practice of art itself: what people do, say and think in the process of making, appreciating and criticizing art. These practices, or at least some rational reconstruction of them, fix the sorts of objects with which they are concerned. Proposals inconsistent with or unresponsive to our practices risk losing their purported subject matter, the sense that they are theories of artworks at all.

Perhaps predictably, agreement on this methodology tends to dissolve when it comes to questions of application. Views naturally motivated by one aspect of practice often struggle to make sense of others, and much then turns on the prospects

for explaining away these further conflicts. Disagreement prevails over whether and how much we are beholden to, for example, the apparent modal commitments of practitioners, their explicitly metaphysical or ontological views, semantic considerations surrounding reference to artworks, and the reflective views of informed critics as against those of a wider public. So too, there are questions about the limits on idealizing or redescribing the practices, the sorts of paraphrase to which we can subject them, and, in the end, how much flat-out error can be attributed to participants. Further, some theorists hold that we need only explain the surface appearances of the practices – for example, the bare truth of various utterances – while others would demand that we additionally do justice to the ways in which the phenomena are conceived or understood from within practice. Increasingly, the very rules of engagement are as much the topic of philosophical dispute as the ontological proposals themselves.

It is important to keep in mind the descriptive nature of the enterprise. One should not expect the ontology of art to deliver evaluative judgments, as opposed to explaining how such judgments and the reasons behind them are possible and make sense. So too, one must resist the temptation to embed one's critical views in one's ontology, so as to make properly aesthetic questions appear metaphysical. Rather, the task is to provide a theoretical background against which properly aesthetic questions can be addressed, one permitting the formulation of a wide variety of views and arguments, precisely that dizzy variety of claims that constitute our artistic practices.

Against this standard picture, Aaron Ridley (2003) and Christopher Bartel (2012) claim that such a value-neutral approach to ontology renders it irrelevant to the value-laden questions of central concern to aestheticians, and they wonder whether ontology so conceived is tenable. In a similar vein, Robert Kraut (forthcoming) worries that the method of reflective equilibrium envisioned by most ontologists cannot supply robust explanations and justifications of our practices, for the accounts we get can, at best, codify what we already do and cannot informatively explain or justify them. Ontology threatens to become a reification of one's views about what is and isn't important in art, and the focus on one aspect of practice over another starts to look less innocent than it seems.

Artworks as particulars

Attention to practice creates considerable pressure to adopt a dualist ontology of art, for our practices appear to embed a distinction between singular and repeatable forms of art. Singular artworks are unique, occurring at only one place at a time. Paintings, collages, carved sculptures and Polaroids are typical examples of singular works. Repeatable artworks are those capable of having more than one occurrence in different places at the same time. For example, a novel may have many copies, a play many performances, a film many screenings, and a photograph many prints. Each of these occurrences is, in some way, a full-fledged presentation of the work through which appreciation of that work is possible. The distinction is reinforced by Nelson Goodman's (1968) distinction between auto- and allographic arts, for it is only repeatable works that resist, in his sense, the possibility of forgery.

The distinction appears to doom the simplest thought that all works of art are physical particulars. It is plausible to claim that a painting is a material particular or that a jazz performance is a particular physical event, but one cannot identify Alfred Stieglitz's photograph "The Steerage" with any one of its prints or Peter Schaffer's play *Equus* with any one of its performances. As Richard Wollheim (1980) pointed out, the occurrences are potentially many and one thing cannot be identical to many distinct things. So too, such works survive the destruction of their occurrences, even such epistemologically privileged occurrences as manuscripts and holographs.

Other views identify artworks with more exotic particulars, often "big" ones that aggregate or combine all the individual occurrences, past, present and future. Most straightforwardly, one could identify repeatable artworks with sets. For any collection of things whatsoever, we may speak of another, abstract individual which has those things as its members. Thus, the entire run of prints of "The Steerage" forms a set and might be considered the work. While this avoids identifying "The Steerage" with any one physical object, the proposal falls afoul of our practices. Multiple artworks could have had more, fewer or different occurrences than they actually have. In contrast, our best understanding of sets requires that a set could not have had more, fewer or different members; its identity is given by its membership. Sets are also abstract objects, not located in time or space, and are thus incapable of causal interaction. According to practice, however, our primary epistemic connection to most, if not all, artworks is perceptual; we see and hear them. Since perception is a causal process, it is unclear how our epistemic practices are to be explained and justified.

A variation of the set proposal appeals to sums instead of sets (Alward 2004; Caplan and Matheson 2006). Like sets, sums are collective particulars, only conceived in terms of parthood instead of membership. Individuals that together form a sum are literally parts of a single whole. A repeatable artwork might be identified with the sum of all its occurrences, a single discontinuous object spread out in time and space. Because sums are themselves concrete objects, the sum proposal appears to avoid principled difficulties with causation and perception. However, the modal problem persists. The identity of a sum is given by its parts and it seems that a sum could not have had different parts as an artwork could have had different occurrences, although Caplan and Matheson (2006) question this assumption.

A very different particularist proposal, due to David Davies (2004), identifies artworks with the process or series of actions by which an artist arrives at his or her product and not the product itself. The end product – say, a painted canvas – is merely the "focus of appreciation" of the work, that in which the artist's ideas and efforts are embedded and through which we can come to appreciate the artist's actions. The distinction between singular and repeatable works becomes a difference between kinds of foci. Some are themselves physical objects, while others are templates from which physical objects can be minted or specifications requiring further enactment to reach the point at which appreciation is possible. By identifying works with particular bits of history, the proposal avoids a number of epistemic, causal and modal difficulties, but most find the view's central commitments – that, for example, painted canvases hanging in galleries and museums are not in fact the artworks, but only the product of the real artworks which have already happened – difficult to square with the ordinary conceptions embedded in our practices.

Another exotic particular view, attributed to Croce (1909) and Collingwood (1938), holds that all artworks are mental particulars – ideas in the minds of artists – of which physical manifestations are only expressions. While this monistic view avoids identifying multiple works with diverse and ephemeral physical things, it is also starkly at odds with our epistemic practices. While artists would enjoy direct access to their works, on a par with their access to their own beliefs and pains, the view requires that audiences have only indirect, testimonial contact with works, on a par with your access to my headache or beliefs. This thought abandons the objectivity and publicity of artworks we take for granted and has been roundly rejected.

Artworks as universals

Most ontologists of art have abandoned the thought that repeatable works of art are particulars. Instead, they identify repeatable works with one or another variety of universal. In the broadest sense, universals are those things that are capable of having instances, usually more than one in different places at the same time, all of which share some common nature or satisfy some common condition. It is immediately tempting to explain the aesthetic distinction between singular and repeatable artworks in terms of the metaphysical distinction between particulars and universals. One could say that singular works are particulars, repeatable works are universals and that occurrences of those repeatable works are their instances.

The type theory

Many distinguish different sorts of universal – properties, classes, kinds, types, Platonic Forms, Aristotelian universals, Fregean concepts – based on subtle differences in their alleged behaviors and prefer to identify repeatable artworks with a certain variety because of those differences. The most popular approach, originating with Wollheim (1980), identifies multiple works with types.

The term "type" comes from C. S. Peirce's (1933: 242) semantic distinction between "type" and "token" senses of words. In its token sense, a word is used to refer to a particular occurrence; in its type sense, it refers to that of which tokens are occurrences. The word "photograph," for instance, enjoys this type–token ambiguity and can refer to either particular prints or that of which they are prints, i.e. photographic works. Wollheim points out that a characteristic pattern of predication comes with Peirce's ambiguity. What can be said of all well-formed tokens of a type can be said of the type as well. If every well-formed performance of *Hamlet* has five acts, it is also true to say that *Hamlet* itself has five acts.

The type theory moves beyond these merely semantic observations to posit a variety of universal, a type, to which these words refer when used in their type senses. Types are thus said to be both property-like, in having token instances, and object-like, in serving as a locus for further predication and identification with artworks. Supplying the types to be identified with artworks is a matter of providing their identity conditions, i.e. when two occurrences count as tokens of the same type. Applied to repeatable artworks, the idea is simple. If one could specify what it

takes for two prints to count as prints of the same photograph or two performances to count as performances of the same play, then one would have specified what sort of type a photograph or play is. There are two things going on here. One is an investigation of the identity conditions of various works of art, which is an inquiry of interest to all ontologists of art, not just type theorists. Another is the type theorist's claim that the answers to the individuation questions about artworks serve to introduce the objects (that is, types) with which the works are to be identified.

Individuation

All agree that repeatable works are individuated, at least in part, by the intrinsic qualitative and structural features of their occurrences. What two prints look like or what two performances sound like is clearly relevant to the question of whether they are prints or performances of the same work. Not all intrinsic features are relevant. While the words and the order in which they appear are crucial for copies of a novel, the typeface in which they are set is irrelevant. On some views, intrinsic features are all that matter to individuation, as Peter Kivy (1993), Roger Scruton (1997) and Julian Dodd (2007) hold of musical works. According to such "sonicist" views, the identity of musical works is purely a matter of how they sound. The underlying motivation for such theories is generally some form of aesthetic empiricism, the idea that the only properties of a work relevant to critical appreciation are those available through immediate experience. Individuative views of this sort generate a type theory on which musical works can be thought of as the purely sonic structures shared by their occurrences. Similarly, a novel might be thought of as a lexical structure; a photograph, as a visual or pictorial structure; and a cast sculpture, as a shape.

While some hold that only intrinsic features are relevant to work identity, others add extrinsic, historical features of tokens to the list. For instance, two photographic prints might be intrinsically alike even though they are prints of different photographs. The identity conditions for photographs must make reference to the causal history of the prints and not just their intrinsic, qualitative features.

Most of the pressure for this extension comes from skepticism towards aesthetic empiricism. Walton (1970) argues that the aesthetic properties of a work depend on its genre and that genre, in turn, is determined by contextual features. Others (e.g. Danto 1981; Levinson 1990; Currie 1988) offer thought experiments in which distinct artists happen to make exactly similar works in different contexts and argue that the resulting works would have different aesthetic features and would thus, by Leibniz's law, be distinct works. Opponents of such contextualist reasoning argue either that the incompatible properties in such thought experiments are not properly properties of the work, as opposed to, say, the artist or the artist's actions, or that the having of such properties is relativized to, say, audiences, and are thus compatible after all. There is also an ongoing dispute regarding musical performances and whether the way in which the sounds are produced – with the actual instruments called for in the score – is aesthetically relevant and, thus, part of the identity conditions for musical works, as Levinson (1990) and Stephen Davies (2001) argue against the sonicist. The types such individuative views give rise to can be thought of

as contextualized structures, for they demand both a certain intrinsic structure and extrinsic history of their tokens.

Normativity of works

A complicating factor is the normative dimension of repeatable works, for the production of their occurrences is subject to norms of correctness. One upshot is that some occurrences of repeatable works will be mistaken or defective in various respects. This poses a difficulty for type-theoretic accounts, which seek what is common to all occurrences. Most wish to avoid the fate of Nelson Goodman's (1968) nominalistic account, which demands that all performances of a musical work comply perfectly with a score and is thought to conflict fatally with our practices in this regard.

One reaction, that of Wolterstorff (1980) and Dodd (2007), is to suggest that the types on offer are "norm kinds," which are said to possess both correct and incorrect tokens. Correct tokens are those that exactly satisfy the condition associated with a type, while incorrect tokens are those that fall short of exact satisfaction without departing too greatly from the specification. Levinson (1990), on the other hand, subscribes to a more orthodox, "descriptive" notion on which there are no incorrect tokens of a type. To compensate, he identifies two types. The first has as tokens all mostly successful results of an intention to perform a work, i.e. all performances. The second includes only those performances that correctly instance the structure (and performing means) of the work, and it is this second type with which Levinson identifies the work. Incorrect performances are held not to be literal tokens of the work itself, but only tokens of the type *performance-of-W*. Both accounts can seem to be strained attempts to capture a natural distinction of practice, that between the conditions in which a norm applies to an individual and those in which an individual satisfies applicable norms.

Event-types

A more radical type-theoretic proposal is due to Gregory Currie (1988). Unlike other type theorists, Currie is a monist, claiming that all artworks are types of an unusual sort. Thus he, along with Peter Strawson (1966), rejects the distinction between singular and repeatable arts and claims that apparently singular arts such as painting are, in principle, repeatable. The types with which Currie identifies artworks are, unlike in previous proposals, not types whose tokens are objects, such as prints, or events, such as performances, but rather the particular creative actions of artists, i.e. the very events with which Davies identifies works. For Currie, the work is not a physical object produced, a performance or even a structure that such objects and performances may share, but rather the way in which an artist arrived at that structure. Works are thus action-types: an individual's arriving at a certain structure via a certain "heuristic," by which Currie means the sort of intellectual path which led the artist to that structure. As with Davies's view, the various prints and performances that we perceive are not tokens of works, but instances of the structure the artist arrives at that allow us to appreciate, in part, the real work, which is the way the artist selected that structure. Where Davies identifies the works

with particular creative acts, Currie identifies them with types of creative acts, ones that might in principle be instantiated in other creative acts, e.g. in the efforts of Twin Earth doppelgängers.

Troubles with type theory

While the type theory is enormously influential, it is susceptible to a number of important criticisms. One we have seen before in relation to the works-as-sets proposal. Types, like sets, are abstract objects and are, unlike their concrete tokens, incapable of causal interaction. If works are types, then it is unclear how they are perceptible or how the epistemology of types, as opposed to that of their concrete instances, is supposed to go. Typically, type theorists have held that one perceives the qualities of the type by perceiving the qualities of their well-formed tokens, perhaps by being in causal contact with an instance of the property required by the condition on tokens.

One might also wonder how it is that types can bear some of the very same properties that their concrete tokens do, as the sharing of predicates suggests, even though they are not in time and space. How could an abstract object be literally over an hour long, red or sweet-sounding? Wolterstorff (1980) suggests that the shared predicates are used "analogically," that is, shift their meaning in a systematic way when applied to works. On this account, while it is correct to say both "*Hamlet* has five acts" and "this performance of *Hamlet* has five acts," only the latter is meant literally. In the first case, what one means is that the type is one which has five-acted tokens. The ambiguity posited by this account is challenged by Predelli (2011), who suggests that predication of repeatable artworks is better understood as a kind of generic predication, involving only the ordinary univocal predicates we apply to their concrete occurrences.

A related problem has received more extended attention. If types are not susceptible to causal interaction, it is difficult to understand how they could be created or destroyed. Types, it would seem, exist eternally, outside of time altogether. And yet our practices seem centrally to embed the thoughts that artists create their works and that these works can be destroyed. Type theorists have two avenues of response. Some deny that our practices do embed these claims. Kivy (1993) and Dodd (2007) claim that the point of *creation* talk in our practices concerns the creativity of artists, not literal creation. Such talk serves to mark something we value in the activity of artists, but something which we find also in cases in which there is no creation but only discovery.

The second avenue is to claim that some abstract objects can be created after all. This requires giving up the most orthodox conception of universals, on which they exist eternally, in favor of some less standard conception. Levinson (1990) argues that some types cannot be tokened before a certain time, because the tokens require a certain historical context to exist, and that these types only come to be when they can be tokened. Such "indicated types" are brought into existence when an artist picks out some pure, uncreated type to be the structure of her work. Dodd (2007) argues that this confuses questions about the temporality of condition satisfaction with the temporality of the type itself. Others, including Predelli (2001), worry that Levinson has failed to identify some new, created type as opposed to a relation of interest between an artist and an uncreated, pure type.

Finally, some have tried to prize the creation issue apart from the causal inertness issue. Caplan and Matheson (2004) point out that even if sets are causally inert, some of them seem to come into existence. There seems no way for the singleton set whose only member is Socrates to exist before Socrates himself, but this suggests that the set comes into existence in time even though it cannot causally interact.

Another problem with the type theory concerns the modal profiles of types as opposed to artworks (Rohrbaugh 2003). Our practices appear to accept that artworks are modally flexible, which is to say that an artwork could have been a little different than it actually is, had the artist made it that way. A painter could have added another stroke, a poet could have chosen a different word or a composer could have used a few different notes and the result would have been the very same work. The problem is that types are not modally flexible in this way. Recall that the identity of a type is given by the condition it imposes on tokens. This condition also applies to merely possible tokens, as the type *square* has both actual and merely possible tokens, all of which have the same shape. Because of this, it is incoherent to speak of a type that actually requires its tokens to be *F* but might have required its tokens to be *G* instead; those *G*-ish tokens could only be tokens of some distinct type. But now, though it is plausible to think that Austen could have written *Emma* so that the fourth word was "rich" instead of "wealthy," any type that requires the fourth word of its tokens to be "wealthy" could not count those counterfactual copies as correct copies of *Emma*, which is what they would have been had she written it that way.

Deflationism

A natural thought at this point is that no ontological proposal can do justice to the ways in which our artistic practices represent their objects. If the phenomenon of repeatability demands an instantiable abstract object, while other central aspects of practice demand a concrete object of history, it can seem that no object can possibly fit the bill. Recently, some have proposed simply accepting this thought and making do. Ross Cameron (2008) suggests that, as far as fundamental ontology goes, there simply are no artworks. Instead, he advises a project of accounting for the truth conditions of our talk about artworks directly in terms of some metaphysically basic constituents like mereological simples. Thus reanalyzed, our ordinary talk would not commit us to the existence of the artworks it appears to concern and we would be free of demands to find objects to play those conflicted roles. Similarly, Andrew Kania (2008) suggests that we adopt a fictionalist account of our ordinary talk about artworks. Again, artworks would not literally exist on this account, but we talk as if there were such things, much in the way that we talk about the denizens of fictional worlds under a kind of pretense of their existence. Both views stand in an unusual relation to our pragmatic constraints. On the one hand, because the views need not attribute a consistent conception of artwork to practitioners, the views promise to do a *better* job of handling what we say in practice; they are content to describe what they find with minimal redescription or idealization. On the other hand, they

attribute to us a kind of alienation from our practices, for our talk of "artworks" is understood through resources wholly external to the practices' self-understanding. Such views seem theories of last resort, and their appeal turns precisely on how seriously we take the supposed incoherence of practice.

Metaontology again

As mentioned at the outset, the deepest divisions among theorists are turning out to be the differences in their methodological views and how they understand the pragmatic constraint to operate. It is possible to see two broad viewpoints emerging in the literature, with metaontology skeptics like Kraut offering a third option. The dominant picture, foregrounding the heritage of Quine and Lewis, takes seriously the analogy with scientific theorizing. Reflection on our practices supplies what you might call "the conceptual role of the work," and the task of ontologists is to find the objects that best fit that role. When ontologists point out how their proposals explain parts of practice, would explain other suitably paraphrased parts and dismiss the importance of the unexplained portions, this picture is typically operating in the background. But it is also this picture that makes space for the possibility of massive error. Should the search for a role player end unsuccessfully, deflationary strategies become an acceptable alternative. So too, it can encourage the thought that the data of practice are mere data, susceptible to legitimate explanation in a variety of ways, even using conceptual resources wholly alien to practice. Lastly, the picture presumes a range of antecedently available candidates to play the roles. Most have taken these to be supplied by our more general philosophical reflections: the physical objects, events, sums, sets, types, properties and so on that we find on offer in the various ontological proposals.

Against this trend, some have begun to suspect that the relation of ontology to our practices is more intimate than this picture would have it. Drawing on the Carnapian thread as against the Quinean one, Amie Thomasson (2005, 2010) argues that the analogy with scientific theorizing is a poor one and that in the case of art ontology there is no question of discovering what the artworks are, nor room for the possibility of massive, collective error about the objects of our artistic practices. Rather, artworks simply are those things which answer to the criteria of existence and identity we find in our practices; our engagement in those practices suffices for their existence, and no further "but are they really there?" question is in order. Thomasson's arguments have been criticized by Dodd (2012) and Robert Stecker (2009), who dispute her claim that our practices must embed privileged identity and existence conditions in order to secure reference to artworks. Even so, the broader picture behind it – that our practices are in some way or another productive of the objects of their concern and not simply tracking (or failing to track) some antecedent objects – presents an alternative to the usual self-understanding of ontologists. It reappears in Peter Lamarque's (2010) distinction between work and object, where the existence of a work over and above some mere object is a matter of ongoing appropriate cultural conditions. Conflict between these pictures is likely to be a continuing source of philosophical interest.

See also Expressivism (Chapter 11), Goodman (Chapter 18), Definitions of art (Chapter 21), Categories of art (Chapter 22), Authenticity in performance (Chapter 44), Fakes and forgeries (Chapter 45), Sculpture (Chapter 58).

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24
THE AESTHETIC

James Shelley

Introduced into the philosophical lexicon during the eighteenth century, the term *aesthetic* has come to apply to a variety of items, including judgments, attitudes, experiences, qualities, objects and values. These items – and any others that belong on the list – make up the aesthetic. Though philosophical questions particular to each of these items have arisen, this chapter will address the general question of what makes any of them aesthetic.

Suppose we say that a *general aesthetic theory* is a theory capable of answering that general question. Suppose we say that an *aesthetically basic item* is an item whose aesthetic status can be explained without appeal to any other aesthetic item, and which can therefore be appealed to in explanation of the aesthetic status of other aesthetic items. This will allow us to divide up general aesthetic theories according to which item or items each takes to be aesthetically basic. A judgment theory, for instance, will be a general aesthetic theory holding judgment to be aesthetically basic, an experience theory a general aesthetic theory holding experience to be aesthetically basic and so on. It will also allow us to divide up the history of theorizing about the aesthetic from the eighteenth century to the present day in the following way. The first general aesthetic theories were judgment theories. These were the theories of taste predominant mainly in Great Britain throughout the whole of the eighteenth century. Such theories reached a culmination, though arguably also an impasse, in Kant's theory of taste, and were supplanted thereafter by attitude theories and experience theories. These latter held sway until the second half of the twentieth century, when George Dickie unleashed a series of celebrated attacks on attitude theories in general and on the variety of experience theory then prevalent. Soon thereafter aestheticians began gravitating to a variety of experience theory that survived Dickie's attacks, and it is this theory that supplies the notion of the aesthetic commonly presupposed in present-day discussions of aesthetic matters.

The distance traveled from the original eighteenth-century notion of the aesthetic to this present-day one is considerable. That we have made progress in traveling it is not obvious.

Judgment theories

Though people apparently have been theorizing about beauty for about as long as people have been theorizing about anything, there is justice to the claim that

theorizing about the aesthetic began in earnest in the eighteenth century. The first full-blown aesthetic theories emerged, in part, as correctives to the rationalist theories of beauty that had achieved dominance in continental Europe over the previous century. A rationalist theory of beauty holds judgments of beauty to be judgments of reason – it holds, in other words, that we judge things to be beautiful by reasoning them to be so, where reasoning them to be so typically involves inferring them to be so from some principle or rule. It was against such theories that mainly British philosophers working mainly within an empiricist framework – Lord Shaftesbury (Cooper 2001 [1711]), Francis Hutcheson (Hutcheson 2004 [1725]) and David Hume (Hume 1985 [1757]), to name a few of the most influential – developed theories of taste. The fundamental idea behind any such theory is the idea that judgments of beauty are not mediated by inferences from principles or rules, but rather have all the immediacy of straightforwardly sensory judgments. It is the idea, in other words, that we do not reason to the conclusion that things are beautiful, but rather "taste" that they are. This is the reason the British empiricists referred to judgments of beauty as judgments of taste.

Though the use of the expression *aesthetic judgment* did not become widespread until after Kant adopted it in 1790, there seems little harm in using it to refer anachronistically to what the British theorists had in mind, inasmuch as the term *aesthetic* (deriving from the Greek for sensory perception) preserves the implication of immediacy carried by the term *taste*. Nor is there any harm in allowing this use of the term *aesthetic* to migrate from *judgment* to *value*, *pleasure*, *attitude* and so on, so long as we keep in mind that aesthetic values just are those values we aesthetically judge, aesthetic pleasures just are those pleasures by which we aesthetically judge, and the aesthetic attitude just is that attitude we assume in aesthetically judging. To refer, however, to the rationalist theory dominant on the Continent as a *rationalist aesthetic theory* or as a *rationalist theory of taste* would be seriously misleading. A theory that regards judging beauty as a matter of inference from rules is a theory that regards beauty as something other than an aesthetic value.

The eighteenth-century claim that judgments of beauty share the immediacy of sensory judgments has seemed to some to imply a sensory formalism according to which only sensory objects can be beautiful. But the eighteenth-century thinkers who asserted this claim did not see it that way. They tended to countenance a great variety of aesthetic objects, routinely grouping mathematical theorems, scientific discoveries and philosophical theories together with diverse kinds of works of art and natural objects. Their ability to embrace this diversity rested on a distinction they tended to draw between the act of grasping an object preparatory to judging it and the act of judging the object once grasped. It was the latter act that they claimed to be immediate. The former they allowed to be as cognitively mediated as any rationalist might want. In Hume's words:

> [I]n order to pave the way for [a judgment of taste], and give a proper discernment of its object, it is often necessary, we find, that much reasoning should precede, that nice distinctions be made, just conclusions drawn, distant comparisons formed, complicated relations examined, and general facts fixed and ascertained … [I]n many orders of beauty, particularly those of

> the fine arts, it is requisite to employ much reasoning, in order to feel the proper sentiment.
>
> (Hume 1975 [1751]: 173)

Hume here is adumbrating an idea which he had inherited from Shaftesbury and Hutcheson and which he shared with many others of his time – the idea that the faculty of taste is an "internal sense." An internal sense differs from an "external" or "bodily" sense in that it depends on the operation of other faculties for its supply of objects. But because an internal sense as such is indifferent as to which other faculties do the supplying, it can in principle pronounce on any object that the mind can bring before it. Empirical investigation may of course reveal the internal sense of beauty to have an affinity for certain kinds of objects over others. But, if anything, the investigations eighteenth-century theorists actually undertook tended to reveal a preference for objects of intellect over objects of external sense.

The claim that aesthetic judgment is internally-sensible functions to separate it both from externally-sensible judgment, which depends wholly on itself for its objects, and from rational judgment, which is inference-mediated. This makes it tempting to think that the internal-sensibility of aesthetic judgment is sufficient to ground a general aesthetic theory. But there is good reason to resist this thought. Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Hume all argued that moral judgments are also internally sensible. Of course Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Hume also believed this fact to show that moral judgments are judgments of taste no less than are judgments of beauty, and were happy, as a result, to refer to virtue as a species of beauty. They regarded moral judgments as aesthetic in the sense in which we are currently employing the term, strange as that may sound. But whether or not we use *aesthetic* in this broad sense, the difference that we now mark between moral and aesthetic judgments remains, and beyond Hume's bald assertion of a phenomenological difference between the pleasure by which we judge beauty and the pleasure by which we judge virtue (Hume 1978 [1739]: 617), there is little in the British literature on taste to distinguish them. This is one reason to attach importance to Kant's claim that pleasure in the beautiful is disinterested.

Kant is hardly the first to have made such a claim. The claim that pleasure in the beautiful is disinterested had been a staple of every eighteenth-century theory of taste from Shaftesbury on. But from Shaftesbury on this claim had largely been the claim that pleasure in the beautiful is not self-interested in the way that Hobbes and his followers had taken moral pleasure to be. Kant reinterpreted the notion of disinterest such that it could function as a wedge between the judgment of beauty and moral judgment.

According to Kant, to say that a pleasure is interested is to say that it stands in a relation to the faculty of desire. The pleasure involved in judging an action to be morally good is interested because such a judgment issues in a desire or motive to bring the action into existence, that is, to perform it. By contrast, the pleasure involved in judging an object to be beautiful is disinterested because such a judgment issues in no motive to do anything in particular. That is what Kant means when he says that the judgment of taste is not practical but rather "merely contemplative" (Kant 2000 [1790]: 95).

But if Kant thus succeeded in isolating the aesthetic, he may have done so at the cost of rendering one of its items – aesthetic value – inexplicable. The difficulty does not lie in explaining what makes aesthetic value aesthetic. On a Kantian picture, aesthetic value just is that value we immediately judge things to have on the basis of disinterested pleasure. The problem lies in explaining what makes aesthetic value value. At least according to one plausible conception, values necessarily give us reasons to do things. Your judgment that canary wine is agreeable gives you reason to pour yourself a glass. Your judgment that dealing honestly has moral value gives you reason to deal honestly. But then it is the very interestedness of the pleasures taken in the agreeable and in the morally good that marks the agreeable and the morally good as values. Different values stand in different relations to the faculty of desire, but it is their standing in some relation to that faculty that makes them values at all. But then it should not be surprising if the disinterestedness of the pleasure in the beautiful succeeds in singling beauty out among values. The problem is that it singles beauty out as the value that isn't one. Nor is it open to Kant (or anyone else holding a theory of taste) to identify aesthetic value with the value of the pleasure by which we judge aesthetically. To regard a pleasure as the means by which we judge an object to have value is to regard it as if it were the reflection of the object's value – the means, as it were, by which the object makes its value known to us. But surely a pleasure that reflects value cannot also be the value that it reflects.

Perhaps the general problem facing judgment theories can be put in the form of a dilemma. Either they cannot explain what makes aesthetic value value or they cannot explain the difference between the aesthetic and the moral.

Attitude theories

Schopenhauer seems to have been the first to advance a general aesthetic theory holding something other than judgment to be aesthetically basic. Indeed, although his *World as Will and Representation* appeared within thirty years of the publication of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Schopenhauer has next to nothing to say about aesthetic judgment. His focus instead is on what he tends to call "aesthetic contemplation," and the difference between this and aesthetic judgment is not merely terminological. Whereas aesthetic judgment is the means by which we discover objects to bear aesthetic value, aesthetic contemplation is itself the source of aesthetic value. Whereas immediacy is principally what makes aesthetic judgment aesthetic, disinterest – or "will-lessness" as Schopenhauer prefers to call it – is principally what makes aesthetic contemplation aesthetic. Indeed the terms *aesthetic* and *will-less* are all but interchangeable in Schopenhauer's usage.

But will-lessness does more in Schopenhauer's account than to make aesthetic contemplation aesthetic. It is also what makes aesthetic contemplation valuable. Ordinary, practical existence finds us at the mercy of our own desires in what Schopenhauer colorfully refers to as "the penal servitude of willing" (Schopenhauer 1969 [1819]: 196). This servitude is painful in itself as well as cognitively blinkering in that it forces our attention to only those aspects of objects that promise to fulfill or threaten to thwart our desires. Hence the value of aesthetic contemplation is dual.

It is subjectively valuable insofar as it offers a respite from the painful grind of practical existence and objectively valuable insofar as it affords distortion-free insight into the essences of things:

> When, however, an external cause or inward disposition suddenly raises us out of the endless stream of willing, and snatches knowledge from the thralldom of the will, the attention is now no longer directed to the motives of willing, but comprehends things free from their relation to the will … Then all at once the peace, always sought but always escaping us … comes to us of its own accord, and all is well with us.
>
> (Schopenhauer 1969 [1819]: 196)

Schopenhauer is not now as widely read by Anglo-American aestheticians as he once was, and this fact has hidden the large and direct influence he continued to exert over Anglo-American aesthetic theory well into the twentieth century. If you identify aesthetic contemplation with what would later come to be known as the aesthetic attitude, you will see Schopenhauer at the beginning of the tradition culminating in the writings of Edward Bullough and Jerome Stolnitz. If you emphasize the passages of *The World as Will and Representation* in which Schopenhauer seems to speak of a special phenomenology that attends aesthetic contemplation, you will see him as inaugurating the tradition that culminates in the writings of Clive Bell and Monroe Beardsley.

The influence of Schopenhauer on the attitude theorists can be easily discerned in the sharp contrast they draw between the practical and the aesthetic. Though Bullough prefers to speak of "psychical distance" rather than disinterest or will-lessness, he obviously has something very similar in mind when he characterizes such distance as something we achieve "by putting the phenomenon, so to speak, out of gear with our actual practical self; by allowing it to stand outside the context of our personal needs and ends – in short, by looking at it 'objectively'" (Bullough 1995 [1912]: 298–99). Stolnitz characterizes the aesthetic attitude straightforwardly in terms of disinterest. It is an attitude you bear toward an object only insofar as you attend to it disinterestedly, where attention is disinterested only insofar as it is not guided by any practical purpose (Stolnitz 1960: 32–36). Bullough and Stolnitz both follow Schopenhauer in holding objects of ordinary, practical experience to be fragmented and one-sided relative to the luxuriant and complete objects of aesthetic experience.

Aesthetic-attitude theories have fallen on hard times and count few remaining adherents. George Dickie is widely regarded as having delivered the fatal blow in his 1964 essay "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude." There Dickie argues that there is no such thing as disinterested attention, on the grounds that all alleged instances of interested attention are in fact instances of inattention. Consider, for example, the following group of spectators at a performance of *Othello*: a husband who becomes increasingly suspicious of his wife as the action proceeds, an impresario who estimates the size of the audience, a father who takes pride in his daughter's performance, and a moralist who attempts to assess the moral effects the play will produce in its audience. Though the attitude theorist will regard such cases as paradigms of interested attention, Dickie maintains that they are all cases of inattention: the husband is

attending to his wife, the impresario to his profits, the father to his daughter, and the moralist to the moral consequences of the play. Hence there is no such thing as interested attention, and so no such thing as disinterested attention either. There is just attention and the lack of it (Dickie 1964: 57–59).

That Dickie's argument carried the day is beyond dispute. That it had to is not so obvious, since it seems the attitude theorist might plausibly reinterpret each of Dickie's examples. The impresario is clearly not attending to the performance, but for that very reason it is hard to see why the attitude theorist should grant his as a paradigmatic case of interested attention. As for the husband, father and moralist, it might be argued that each is attending to the performance. The husband must be attending to the performance, since it is the action of the play, as presented in the performance, that is making him jealous. The father must be attending to the performance, since it is an element of the performance – his daughter's acting – that is the source of his pride. The moralist must be attending to the performance, since otherwise he has no basis for his conjectures about its moral effects on the audience. Of course none of them is giving the performance the attention it arguably demands. Each of them is attending to the performance in a blinkered, fragmentary, one-sided way. But that, of course, is the attitude theorist's point.

Experience theories

It is presumably from Schopenhauer that Clive Bell takes the idea that objects of aesthetic contemplation raise us out of the stream of everyday, practical existence:

> art transports us from the world of man's activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation. For a moment we are shut off from human interests; our anticipations and memories are arrested; we are lifted above the stream of life.
>
> (Bell 1958 [1914]: 27)

But Bell departs from Schopenhauer over the value of such contemplation. Its value cannot lie in any relief it offers from the hell of practical life, as Schopenhauer supposes, since practical life is not hell but rather a "jolly country" of "snug foothills" and "cosy valleys" (Bell 1958 [1914]: 31). Nor can its value lie in any cognitive insight it affords us into the nature of reality, as Schopenhauer also supposes, since works of art as such never show us anything about anything, being nothing but the purest of sensory-formal compositions. The value of aesthetic contemplation, according to Bell, consists in the phenomenologically distinct emotion that attends it – an austere, exalted, thrilling, rapturous, strange, ecstatic emotion which Bell dubs "the aesthetic emotion," the undergoing of which he regards as among "the most valuable things in the world" (Bell 1958 [1914]: 32). To the objection that there is no single phenomenologically distinct emotion that attends contemplation of all and only aesthetic objects, Bell replies that "all sensitive people agree" that there is (Bell 1958 [1914]: 17) – a reply as difficult to disprove as it is to believe, unless you happen to find yourself among Bell's sensitive few.

Monroe Beardsley initially followed after Bell in holding aesthetic experience to be phenomenologically distinct and valuable in itself. But rather than offer vague

descriptions of an experience accessible to a select few, Beardsley offered a concrete, detailed description whose accuracy "each of us can test in his own experience" (Beardsley 1958: 527). According to that description, aesthetic experience is focused, intense and unified, where to be unified is to be coherent and complete. To be coherent and complete, in turn, is to possess elements related to one another in particular ways. The elements of a coherent experience are related one to another such that there is "continuity of development," "a sense of overall providential pattern of guidance," and "an orderly cumulation of energy toward a climax" (Beardsley 1958: 528). The elements of a complete experience "counterbalance" or "resolve" one another such that "some degree of equilibrium or finality is achieved" and the whole "detaches itself, and even insulates itself, from the intrusion of alien elements" (Beardsley 1958: 528).

If it was Beardsley's aim to distance himself from Bell by providing an account of aesthetic experience that could be tested, he seems to have succeeded. George Dickie made that clear by providing a refutation of Beardsley's account sufficiently decisive, apparently, to persuade Beardsley himself. The gist of Dickie's criticism is that Beardsley, in describing the phenomenology of aesthetic experience, fails to distinguish between the features we experience aesthetic objects as having and the features aesthetic experiences themselves have. So while every feature mentioned in Beardsley's description of the unity of aesthetic experience – continuity of development, mounting of energy toward a climax, counterbalance of elements, equilibrium – surely is a feature we experience some aesthetic objects as having, there is no reason to think of aesthetic experience itself as having any such features. With respect to Beardsley's description of completeness, for example, Dickie holds that

> [o]ne can speak of elements being counterbalanced *in the painting* and say that the painting is stable, balanced and so on, but what does it mean to say the *experience* of the spectator of the painting is stable or balanced? … Aren't characteristics attributable to the painting simply being mistakenly shifted to the spectator?
>
> (Dickie 1965: 132)

Beardsley conceded the force of Dickie's criticism, in time, by giving up on the idea that aesthetic experience has a distinctive phenomenology. But he did not give up on the idea that aesthetic experience is aesthetically basic. Instead, he took the suggestion implicit in Dickie's criticism. If aesthetic experience seems to have a distinctive phenomenology when you mistakenly shift properties from the object to the experience, perhaps this suggests that it is the content of the experience that is distinctive. Perhaps it suggests, in other words, that we can explain what makes aesthetic experience aesthetic by identifying the properties of the object that are its distinctive focus. In his 1982 essay "The Aesthetic Point of View," Beardsley identified these as formal or perceptual properties of the object, namely, "formal unity" and "intensity of regional quality" (Beardsley 1982: 22–23). In thus asserting a connection between the aesthetic and the formal, it may seem as if Beardsley was merely doing what Bell had done almost seventy years before. But Beardsley asserted a stronger connection than Bell had. In 1914 Bell argued, on empirical grounds, for the "hypothesis" that aesthetic experience is the product of experience of form. In 1982 Beardsley asserted, as a matter of

conceptual truth, that aesthetic experience *is* experience of form. On Bell's view it turns out that the aesthetic has a formal basis. The aesthetic just is the formal on Beardsley's.

That Beardsley could treat as analytic truth what Bell could only treat as controversial hypothesis owes as much to intervening developments in the arts as to intervening developments in philosophical aesthetics. But whatever the explanation, the time was apparently right in 1982 for the kind of theory Beardsley asserted. That kind of theory – a general aesthetic theory according to which experience of form is aesthetically basic – soon became predominant among English-speaking aestheticians and remains so to this day. The main objection it has encountered owes to Arthur Danto. Inspired in particular by Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, which are more or less perceptually indistinguishable from the brand-printed cartons in which boxes of Brillo cleaning pads were delivered to grocery stores, Danto argued that for most any artwork it is possible to imagine (a) another object that is perceptually indiscernible from it but which is not an artwork, and (b) another artwork that is perceptually indiscernible from it but which differs in artistic value. It follows, he concluded, that form alone neither makes an artwork nor gives it whatever value it has (Danto 1981: 94–95).

Danto took his objection to show that works of art are not essentially aesthetic objects, and that the nature of art cannot therefore be explained by appeal to aesthetic considerations. Regarding the Brillo boxes that Warhol displayed and those delivered to nearby grocery stores, Danto owned that

> aesthetics could not explain why one was a work of fine art and the other not, since for all practical purposes they were aesthetically indiscernible: if one was beautiful, the other one had to be beautiful, since they looked just alike.
>
> (Danto 2003: 7)

But Danto's objection accomplishes its aim only if we assume an aesthetic theory according to which perceptual indiscernibility implies aesthetic indiscernibility, which is something only a formalist theory of the aesthetic does. But in that case Danto's objection, contrary to Danto's own claims for it, is perhaps not best understood as an objection to aesthetic theories per se but only to formalist versions. To whichever aesthetic theories it does apply, the damage is serious. Though no aesthetic theorist, with the exception of Bell (1958 [1914]: 20), has held works of art to be the only aesthetic objects, every major aesthetic theorist from Shaftesbury to Beardsley has given art a central place in his theory. Every major aesthetic theorist has aimed to explain something about the nature of art, whether that something concerns the way we judge works of art, or the attitude we take toward them, or the kind of experience they afford, or the kind of value they have. This is not to say that an aesthetic theory incapable of explaining anything about the nature of art is useless. It is to say that such a theory cannot do one thing that aesthetic theories have traditionally set out to do. If formalist theories alone are incapable of doing this, we have reason to look elsewhere.

Conclusion

It would be hard to understate the impact Danto's objection has had on the practice of philosophical aesthetics. Whether because many aestheticians nowadays believe,

contrary to what the historical record seems to suggest, that all aesthetic theories are necessarily formalist, or because they believe that the only remaining viable aesthetic theories are as a matter of fact formalist, the prevailing view is that Danto succeeded in placing art beyond the reach of the aesthetic. This has resulted in a diminished interest in aesthetic theory over the past thirty or so years.

Some have made modest attempts to rehabilitate the notion of the aesthetic from within the confines of formalism, broadly construed, by offering what might be called *formalism-and* or *formalism-or* theories. Formalism-and theories hold experience of perceptual form plus something to be aesthetically basic. Jerrold Levinson and Alan Goldman, for instance, allow the content of aesthetic experience to include nonperceptual properties so long as they arise from a base of properties which are themselves primarily perceptual (Levinson 1996: 6; Goldman 1990: 25). Formalism-or theories – of which Noël Carroll's deflationary theory of aesthetic experience is an example (Carroll 2001: 58–62) – hold experience of form to be sufficient though not necessary for aesthetic experience. But others will wonder why any attempt at rehabilitation should retain any connection, however attenuated, between the formal and the aesthetic. It is that connection, after all, that Danto's objection exploits. Moreover it is worth remembering how relatively recent it is, in the rich history of thinking about the aesthetic, that that connection began to receive any real, sustained theoretical interest. We have all but retired formalist theories of art of the sort advocated by Bell and Beardsley. Why must we cling to formalist theories of the aesthetic?

Perhaps we may look to the theories of Frank Sibley and Nelson Goldman, each of whom swam against the tide of aesthetic formalism when it was arguably strongest, for alternatives. Sibley takes a backward-looking approach in his 1959 paper "Aesthetic Concepts," hearkening back to the preformalist days of aesthetic theorizing by providing what is essentially an updated eighteenth-century judgment theory. Sibley holds aesthetic concepts – concepts such as *graceful* and *powerful* – to be aesthetic in virtue of the fact that their application is not condition governed. We do not judge a dance to be graceful or a novel to be powerful, in other words, by inferring the former's grace or the latter's power from a description, however complete, of their nonaesthetic properties (Sibley 2001 [1959]: 3–13). Rather we perceive the gracefulness of the dance and the power of the novel with the immediacy we associate with ordinary sensory perception (Sibley 2001 [1959]: 13–14). Goodman's approach, by contrast, is to strike out in a brand new direction. The aesthetic theory he develops in his 1976 *Languages of Art* is superficially similar to Beardsley's later account in holding aesthetic experience to be aesthetically basic in virtue of its distinctive content. But whereas Beardsley regards that content as formal, Goodman regards it as full-bloodedly cognitive. The four features he identifies as "symptomatic" of the content of aesthetic experience – syntactic density, semantic density, syntactic repleteness and exemplification – are features in virtue of which works of art function symbolically to bring us to an understanding of the world (Goodman 1976: 252–55).

Of course there is no reason to regard the tendencies embodied in Sibley's and Goodman's approaches as mutually exclusive. An aesthetic theory capable of reviving pre-Dantonian interest may have to combine a Sibleyan sensitivity to the best history has to offer with a Goodmanian willingness to leave history behind. One

thing the foregoing historical survey ought to reveal is how much remains to be tried. There is no obvious reason, for instance, that aesthetic judgment, the aesthetic attitude and aesthetic experience should all be treated as aesthetically prior to aesthetic value, yet no one seems to have attempted a general aesthetic theory that takes aesthetic value to be aesthetically basic. Indeed the difficulty judgment theories have in accounting for aesthetic value may well be due to their wrongly prioritizing judgment over value. A further thing the foregoing survey ought to suggest is how much we have to learn from the aesthetic theorists who are most temporally distant from us. Arguably no one since Hume, Kant and Schopenhauer has thought as well about the aesthetic as Hume, Kant or Schopenhauer. We may hope that the best aesthetic theories are yet to come. For the moment, however, they seem to be receding into the past.

See also Empiricism (Chapter 4), Kant (Chapter 5), Idealism (Chapter 7), Sibley (Chapter 19), Definitions of art (Chapter 21), Taste (Chapter 25), Beauty (Chapter 29), Criticism (Chapter 36).

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25
TASTE

Carolyn Korsmeyer

Both in philosophy and in ordinary conversation, the idea of taste is embedded in discourse about art and aesthetic appreciation. People are praised if they display good taste in their choice of art, entertainment, clothes or behavior; they are criticized for dubious preferences and inappropriate demeanor. Popular and public art is sometimes actually suppressed if it is deemed to violate norms of taste. These activities suggest that "taste" labels a set of preferences and dispositions that admit shared social standards and public criticism. At the same time, as the saying goes, "there is no accounting for taste." Aesthetic responses are also understood as immediate and powerful reactions that are not wholly the result of deliberation or choice. Just as a love of chocolate seems immune to persuasion, taste for decoration, music, movies or other art seems in part to emerge from an individual's psychological makeup and personality, not to mention cultural background. How can both these ways of thinking be sound? This question generates what philosophers of earlier times called the "problem of taste," for aesthetics has always harbored a tension between the normativity of critical standards and the fact that those standards rely upon the notoriously variable responses of individuals.

A study of taste, therefore, requires consideration of perception, the development of appreciation and the determinants of culture that frame both. Is the recognition of aesthetic qualities so grounded in personal responses that beauty is truly in the eye of the beholder? Or do standards of taste indicate, however indirectly, some degree of realism for the qualities we appreciate in art and other objects? If we maintain that there are standards for aesthetic enjoyment, how do we distinguish good from bad taste? Moreover, why do we sometimes find ourselves actually preferring things we suspect are in bad taste? Probably many of us genuinely like certain movies, songs and dances that we acknowledge are not of the highest merit. While aesthetic taste is linked to both quality and enjoyment, clearly there can be a split between acknowledged high quality and the degree of pleasure taken in art.

Some of these issues emerge from the very language philosophers have formulated to consider aesthetic response: the metaphor of taste itself. This term invokes the immediate enjoyment of eating and drinking to elucidate the nature of aesthetic sensibility. Just how apt the metaphor is to account for aesthetic discernment and appreciation has been a matter of philosophical controversy for centuries. To see this, we need to look at the genesis of the term in the formative years of aesthetic theory.

The metaphor of taste

There is no obvious objective property that can be regularly correlated with all instances of appreciation, and many philosophers have puzzled over the nature of the qualities that make an object beautiful or otherwise aesthetically noteworthy. From time to time, theorists have proposed such qualities as harmony or balance to account for good aesthetic traits. However, these describe only certain works and by no means exhaust the range of art forms that are valued for beauty, profundity, insight or accomplishment. The language of taste grows out of attempts to account for appreciation of the extreme variety of excellent objects of art and the nearly equally wide range of natural beauties. Use of the term "taste" and its synonyms in other languages arose in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it became an established theoretical term in philosophies of beauty in the eighteenth century. The term that gives this field its name, "aesthetics," itself came into modern usage at about the same time. It was coined to refer to a kind of knowledge gained through immediate sense perception, but it was soon directed to the experience of beauty and the unique emotive insights that works of art can afford. Speculation about the nature of the aesthetic as well as explorations of taste made for a rich brew of developing philosophical ideas regarding perception, pleasure, art and beauty in early modern philosophy.

While this chapter concerns the concept of taste in Western philosophical aesthetics, the term is not a culture-bound metaphor, limited to philosophy grounded in Europe. Use of "taste" to refer to discerning responses to art is present in other traditions as well, most notably in the complex discourses regarding *rasa* in India. *Rasa*, which can also mean "taste" or "savor," has been a conceptual foundation for Indian aesthetic theory since ancient times. It is especially directed to the appreciation of an artwork's expressive qualities. As such, the connotation of the term links taste as much with emotive response as with discerning perception, distinguishing a number of different states of apprehension for different art forms. Indian traditions are considerably more complex than European theories of taste; nonetheless, these two very different philosophical cultures employ a gustatory foundation to articulate the appreciative apprehension of art.

"Taste" literally refers to one of the five senses, the one that provides gustatory discrimination and enjoyment. As a bodily sense, taste is inevitably linked with pleasure or displeasure; that is to say, it is a sensory response that tends to carry a positive or a negative valence. This affective component is one of the features of gustatory taste that lends itself to employment as a metaphor of aesthetic enjoyment, for the object of taste is not only perceived but also liked or disliked. What is more, the objects of gustatory taste that can be appreciated are enormous, and they vary quite subtly. Taste sensibility admits degrees of receptivity and expertise of judgment. A person of limited palate may not care whether he or she is eating a well-prepared meal, but one with a finely developed sense of taste is able to discern even small amounts of the seasonings that went into its preparation. Therefore, the sense of taste, where one may be dull or sensitive to subtle qualities, is the metaphor also employed in theories of the appreciation of objects of nature and of art. What is more, both literal taste and taste for art require first-hand acquaintance with their

objects. Just as one cannot decide that soup is well seasoned without actually sipping it, so one cannot conclude that music is moving without hearing it.

Most early writers on taste agreed that there is a natural disposition to enjoy objects of beauty in most human perceivers, although that disposition requires experience and education to function at its best. As Voltaire put it, taste

> is a quick discernment like that of the tongue and palate, and … like them, anticipates reflection; like the palate, it voluptuously relishes what is good; and it rejects the bad with loathing; it is also, like the palate, often uncertain and doubtful … and sometimes requires habit to help it form.
>
> (Voltaire 1757: 761)

The need to educate taste must be stressed, for the sense metaphor can too easily suggest that taste is just a perceptual ability provided by nature. The bodily need to eat, which is abetted by the sense of taste, would seem to be built into the human frame for survival purposes. But aesthetic taste, however grounded in natural dispositions, clearly requires cultivation for all but the simplest beauties, and the same can be said for sophisticated gustatory taste, as Voltaire points out. Taste can be a term of manners as well, employed to describe the sensitivity required for polite social interactions and appropriate behavior. Thinking about taste was incorporated into eighteenth-century debates over mental faculties, specifically whether reason, sense or sentiment was more central to the perception of beauty (Kivy 1976; Townsend 2001; Dickie 1996).

As soon as the language of taste entered discourse about art and beauty, certain problems that it foregrounds became the focus of debate. The concept emphasizes the subjectivity of experience of beauty, understood as a particular type of pleasure, and pleasure is necessarily located in a perceiving subject. But this is not the whole story, for judgments of taste are also about objects. The statement that a work of art is beautiful or moving is not just a report that it pleases the speaker but a debatable claim that refers to putative qualities of the object that may be noticed and enjoyed by others. Apt as the sensory metaphor might be to describe varying abilities to perceive subtle qualities, taste is also the sense that by tradition is considered to admit the most variety and idiosyncrasy of all the senses. As the ancients put it, *de gustibus, non est disputandum*: there is no disputing about taste. But is there no disputing about art? Hardly. Works of art are among the most scrutinized, assessed, criticized and lauded of human accomplishments. Recognition of this fact initiated the central theoretical debate of early modern aesthetics: how and whether *standards* could be developed for taste.

Two influential theorists who contributed to the discussion of standards for taste were the Scottish empiricist David Hume (1711–76) and the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). Hume makes central use of the idea that taste in art is developed in ways rather similar to taste for food or drink. He regards the recognition of value to be a function of pleasure and pain responses, and the similar constitution of all human beings furnishes the grounds for agreement about matters of value. To function properly, the evaluative sentiments must be in good working order. Just as a person with a bad cold is not in a position to assess the qualities of a meal, so an

inexperienced and naive person is not well situated to judge the qualities of art. Hume advances his argument on behalf of standards of taste with an anecdote about two tasters of a hogshead of wine who are ridiculed because they claim that the wine possesses faint traces of metal and leather that no one else notices. But they are vindicated when the wine is finished, for at the bottom of the cask is a key attached to a leather thong, and the discerning tasters are proved to have the most delicate taste, "where the organs are so fine as to allow nothing to escape them, and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition" (Hume 1898 [1757]: 273).

Exactly what qualities delicate taste discerns is a question Hume declines to answer, recognizing that the diversity of objects that reward our attention is too heterogeneous to be captured in a formula. He never fastens upon any particular objective qualities that correlate with the experience of beauty, preferring to let the verdict of history advance supreme examples of the best art to whet and hone the delicate taste of critics and to perpetuate traditions of good taste. One of the chief means by which one can develop the delicacy of one's own taste is to practice enjoying the great works that have already achieved recognition and withstood the test of time.

Kant, an appreciative critic of Hume, was wholly dissatisfied with the conclusion that taste emerges as a general agreement among most good critics. He demanded a stronger brand of universality for what he termed aesthetic judgments, which required him to emphasize the distinction between that which is merely pleasant (such as bodily pleasures) and that which is beautiful (Kant 1987 [1790]: 55). He maintained that food and drink, for example, afford mere sensuous pleasure, which can never achieve the universality and importance of true aesthetic judgments. The judgment of taste is grounded in the recognition of a harmony between the form of the object and the structures of understanding, which, being the same in all rational creatures, demand a common recognition and therefore are universal for all perceivers. Kant was particular about the type of pleasure that qualifies as aesthetic: It is not sensuous or rooted in the body, replete with its idiosyncratic satisfactions. It is not a product of satisfied desire; it does not rely even on a conception of what the object of enjoyment ought to be or what it is for. It is, in short, quite "disinterested." In his analysis of taste, Kant advanced the modern distinction between aesthetic values and other kinds of value: moral, cognitive and instrumental.

Debates over the relativity of taste and the possibility of standards for taste are embedded in consideration of pleasure and of the qualities that trigger that pleasure. However, the reliance of taste and appreciation on pleasure generates a set of problems for the philosopher of aesthetics. Does the evident subjectivity of pleasure entail a greater degree of relativity for aesthetic judgments than for other value judgments? Do aesthetic qualities have any objective standing? In the formative years of early modern aesthetics it was fairly widely granted that "beauty" properly refers to the pleasure response of perceivers, but the speculation that there are qualities in the object itself that this pleasure registers never disappeared. Moreover, even if beauty may be analyzed as a way of talking about subjective responses, other aesthetic qualities, such as "balanced" or "strident," resist this treatment and seem to demand more specific reference to the properties possessed by the object of appreciation. It is these latter types of aesthetic qualities that Hume's delicate taste seems

most appropriate to account for, whereas Kant's pure judgment of taste pertains to beauty. (Kant discussed other judgments of taste as well, notably the dependent beauty of art and the powerful emotion of the sublime.) Questions about the objective or subjective status of aesthetic properties continue to be a subject of debate.

Contemporary debates about taste

After the metaphor of taste entered common parlance it became rather taken for granted in aesthetic theory, falling out of philosophical interest for some time. But in the mid-twentieth century it was injected with new vigor and controversy by the arguments advanced by Frank Sibley in a series of essays that invoke taste in an analysis of aesthetic qualities. Aesthetic objects are not just works of art or objects that we happen to appreciate; they are objects that are assessed and appreciated in virtue of certain qualities. But what kinds of qualities? This question links the operation of taste with the ontological status of aesthetic properties.

Sibley's argument relies on a distinction between aesthetic and nonaesthetic qualities (Sibley 1959). Some qualities of art can be noticed by anyone with normally functioning senses who is paying sufficient attention. For example, the fact that a play contains four characters is a quality readily discernible to anyone who can see or hear and count. This kind of quality is "nonaesthetic." Other examples of nonaesthetic qualities include square, loud, pale and in a minor key. These sorts of qualities are also value neutral in that they do not indicate the attributes for which one praises or rejects artworks. Aesthetic qualities are the properties that distinguish an object as worthy of appreciation or criticism: delicate, elegant, powerful, profound, stiff, awkward, and so on, are examples of aesthetic qualities. They are not easily discerned by all perceivers but rather require the exercise of sensitivity that Sibley, following the Humean tradition, labels "taste." Because there is more variation in taste than there is in sense acuity, aesthetic judgments are more likely to disagree than are descriptions of nonaesthetic qualities. Nonetheless, aesthetic qualities are not mere projections on the part of perceivers; they are grounded in the nonaesthetic qualities. But even assuming that aesthetic qualities depend upon nonaesthetic, the former cannot be inferred from the presence of the latter. If one praises a vase as delicate, one might well observe that it is thin and gently curving; but the presence of the latter, nonaesthetic properties does not guarantee the former. An object that is thin and curved might be insipid or limp rather than delicate. Therefore one needs taste to discern the aesthetic quality and cannot infer it from the presence of the nonaesthetic qualities. Sibley's use of taste thus follows closely the reasons invoked in the original coinage of the metaphor, though his analysis of the logic of taste is considerably more exact than one finds in earlier writing.

Gustatory taste

When taste became an element in philosophies of beauty, expanding to cover theories of the perception of aesthetic properties, it was an almost entirely metaphorical

usage. Literal, gustatory taste was not included. The pleasures the latter delivers, like the sense itself, were considered merely bodily and hence not qualified as truly aesthetic. What is more, gustatory taste still suffered under the assumption that its operation is so subjective that it could not sustain the normative roles for aesthetic judgments. In recent years that attitude has begun to change, and philosophers have ventured into analysis of literal taste and its objects, food and drink (Korsmeyer 1999).

The aesthetic standing of gustatory taste experiences needs to be separated from another topic, the issue of whether food and drink qualify among the arts. This latter question opens up a larger one regarding whether "art" comprises the traditional *fine* arts, or whether that distinction has faded in the artworld anyhow, and we are better off considering "art" in a broader sense that admits artworks that are decorative, entertaining and practically useful. The aesthetic standing of taste properties is somewhat less fraught with ambiguity, and we can ask if the experiences of flavor from eating and drinking are experiences that justly count as aesthetic. More precisely, are the qualities discerned from eating and drinking in the category of aesthetic properties? Relatedly, are judgments about literal taste normative, such that expert taste should guide us all, or purely matters of individual preference? Although Sibley's analysis of taste is chiefly directed to critical discourse and art, he himself considered literal taste properties to qualify as aesthetic (Sibley 2001).

Although these questions are now being widely explored, the most detailed philosophical treatments have developed around one particular object of taste: wine, that focus of Hume's own famous example. Wine is arguably among the most complex objects of gastronomic culture, and it is the subject of expert debate and description. It is also controversial whether the properties attributed to the product are "in" the wine itself. Some hold realistic positions (Smith 2007); others are more inclined to grant certain claims of relativism while retaining the possibility for standards of judgment (Todd 2010). And whether the experience of wine qualifies as aesthetic or merely sensuous remains a point of contention (Scruton 2009). Whether wine is an art form or not, discourse about wine has taken its place in the debates over the status and operation of taste.

Good and bad taste

The foregoing issues reveal a duality embedded in the concept of aesthetic discernment that is captured with the taste metaphor. On one hand, taste may be considered an ability to discern subtle qualities in objects. In food and drink the person with (fine) taste can notice trace quantities of herbs or other flavors that lie beneath the threshold of detectability for others. Someone with good artistic taste is more able to discern the subtle points of style that distinguish a genuine painting of an old master from a modern forgery. Perhaps he or she is able immediately to tell Vivaldi from Bach or can order the chronology of Henry James's works by noticing the ripening style of his writing. Acuity for properties such as these is part of the ability to rank objects of taste in terms of quality as well. The gourmet taster can select the better wine; in art the person of taste is able to discern higher quality artifacts from

run-of-the-mill, though to the uninitiated they appear more or less the same. Thus – as the framers of the metaphor would be quick to point out – aesthetic taste no less than gustatory taste can be developed and refined, and when "taste" refers to an ability to detect fine or subtle qualities it is a term of praise for this particular facility.

A second, related meaning implicit in "taste" is laden with even heavier normative weight: taste can also indicate a measure of the quality of an object that is gauged by the enjoyment that an object affords to a person of *good* taste. For Kant, we recall, the judgment of taste joins an object of perception with disinterested pleasure. And colloquially we speak of having a taste for something, that is, having a preference, which means taking more pleasure or delight in one particular type of object rather than another. Demonstrably, not everyone delights in the same objects, and those who diverge from established norms are apt to be criticized for *bad* taste.

To accuse a person of bad taste is to render a severe criticism that may invoke failings aesthetic, moral and social. Those at the receiving end of such a charge may scoff resentfully at the judge and the soundness of the criteria used to distinguish good from bad taste. (The lexicon of this kind of distinction includes terms such as highbrow, lowbrow and the perhaps much worse middlebrow; high and low art; fine art versus craft and popular art; kitsch; and so forth.) Those who conceive of themselves as having good taste may condescend to those with "inferior" tastes, while the latter may consider the former mere snobs with no objective standards to support their own preferences. Indeed, the tradition of fine art (as opposed to craft, decoration or entertainment) is often confounded with the category of "high" (as opposed to "low" or "merely popular") art.

This blending of concepts suggests that objects of high aesthetic quality must be by their very nature difficult, such that only a few will be able truly to appreciate them. Situations that are likely to promote the cultivation of refined taste, such as leisure, education and degree of comfort, tinge the notion of aesthetic discernment with a certain air of social privilege (Shusterman 1993). At worst, the notion of good taste can become snobbish, although such a charge does not preclude the fact that some judgments of taste are better grounded than others (Kieran 2010). The very popularity of certain types of art (some movies and music, for example) may seem to be evidence for the absence of aesthetic quality. This ironically splits off actual aesthetic pleasure from the idea of the best aesthetic taste. Suspicions leading in this direction have led some theorists to the conclusion that the very idea of taste is more of a social than an aesthetic category, that the elite of any society more or less impose their mandarin tastes on the public, who dutifully acknowledge the superiority of the objects of elite preference while pursuing their own more swinish and amusing tastes. Perhaps the most well known of such approaches is represented by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1979), who argues that aesthetic preferences are the product of class distinctions rather than the recognition of standards of quality. While Bourdieu's chief goal is to underscore the class determinants of aesthetic distinctions, his study also revives attention to the sense metaphor. While some seek to include food and drink as legitimate objects of aesthetic appreciation, thereby lifting literal taste to an aesthetic status, Bourdieu argues the converse: different eating habits, which divide people by class and occupation, in fact represent

the only manifestation of real taste. The idea of aesthetic taste is social imposition in disguise.

Perhaps the most intriguing split between good and bad, high and low tastes, however, is not exhibited between different social classes, for one and the same individual may harbor tastes for radically different types of art and aesthetic objects. Moreover, one may have an intense but furtive liking for art that one considers in highly dubious taste, such as horror movies or sentimental romances or marching bands. Taste describes a disposition to respond positively to certain objects and works of art, as well as the ability to discern and assess aesthetic qualities. But there can be considerable disparity between the pleasure that art delivers, especially the immediate pleasure, and art's recognized merit. This observation severs the tight connection between taste and pleasure that forged the first use of the metaphor of taste. Or rather, it leads us to refine the sense of "pleasure" that is appropriate to describe aesthetic appreciation. There are different kinds of aesthetic pleasure, some of which are so taxing that the use of that particular term seems almost perverse. Bernard Bosanquet (1963 [1915]) distinguished "easy" from "difficult" beauty, and similarly one may consider some pleasures more difficult to achieve than others, albeit more rewarding in the long run. This is only a superficial paradox. Difficult pleasure may include appreciation of art with actually painful subject matter such as tragedy, or of complex works that demand the kind of focus and attention that frequently one is too tired or distracted to undertake. Indeed one way to account for a liking for objects of acknowledged poor taste is that one seeks the immediately pleasant as easier than the truly good but demanding, for complex art can strain both the head and the heart (Levinson 1996). But the easier pleasures of amusement quickly pale and rarely sustain pleasure after repeated exposure. These distinctions help to reconcile any divergence between immediate preferences and the works one recognizes as genuinely worthy objects of taste.

The social critique of taste implicitly questions whether developing a sophisticated capacity to appreciate artworks is in itself a worthwhile endeavor. A counterposition is represented by approaches that explore taste as a virtue, pursuing affinities with virtue ethics to amplify aesthetic theories. Those who investigate virtue aesthetics argue that taste and its appreciative exercise is an indispensable component of a good human life, one that anyone might seek to achieve regardless of his or her social position. As such, taste may be seen as a disposition to be receptive to aesthetic qualities that contributes to human flourishing, as Aristotle might have put it. Might the development and exercise of taste contribute to social and communal harmony by fostering shared enjoyment and emotional responses to art (Goldie 2008)? Can taste and its exercise be understood as intrinsic goods (Lopes 2008)? One can answer positively to both questions without assuming that only the highest of fine arts afford worthy objects of aesthetic appreciation, for human flourishing comes in many forms, both social and individual (Cohen 1993).

Although the historical framework that lent taste vigor as a philosophical concept crucial to aesthetic theory has receded, there remain a number of points of intrigue and argument that keep the concept alive and dense. Some maintain allegiance to the original metaphor; others dispute its suitability to capture aesthetic discernment. Some seek to include literal taste as a sense that affords aesthetic appreciation of

food and drink; others continue to insist that only the eyes and ears are inlets for aesthetic perceptual experience. And popular culture and public arts are especially vital grounds for disputes over good and bad taste. Thus centuries after its entry into modern theory, the concept of taste remains alive and controversial.

See also Empiricism (Chapter 4), Kant (Chapter 5), Phenomenology (Chapter 13), Sibley (Chapter 19), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Aesthetic universals (Chapter 26), Beauty (Chapter 29), High art versus low art (Chapter 46).

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26
AESTHETIC UNIVERSALS

Denis Dutton

Art itself is a cultural universal; that is, there are no known human cultures in which there cannot be found some form of what we might reasonably term aesthetic or artistic interest, performance or artifact production: including sculptures and paintings, dancing and music, oral and written fictional narratives, body adornment and decoration. This does not mean that all cultures possess all the various arts. For example, there is no clear analogue in European tradition for the Japanese tea ceremony, which is nevertheless considered by many to be an art form (Okakura 1906). On the other hand, there are cases such as the Dinka, a Nilotic herding people who have no developed indigenous visual art or carving. Instead, their aesthetic interests seem to be directed toward poetic expression and, in the visual realm, toward the markings on the cattle that are so important to their lives: they are, so to speak, keen connoisseurs of cattle markings (Coote 1992). Even within the same cultural region there may be sharp contrasts: in the Sepik River region of northern New Guinea there is an enormous variety of wood carving, while in the highlands of the same country there is very little carving, with vast effort channeled instead into body adornment and the production of decorated fighting shields.

Universalism in traditional aesthetics

Such diverse genres and cultural variability of ways in which aesthetic and artistic interests are focused and expressed raises the question, might it be possible to identify underlying universal features present in all or nearly all artistic forms? It could be argued that much of the philosophy of art and aesthetics has amounted to an attempt to reveal the most important underlying universal features of art. So, to name three aestheticians, Leo Tolstoy believed the universal essence of art is its communicative capacity to tie people to one another (Tolstoy 1960), Friedrich Schiller argued that art derives from a human impulse to play (Schiller 1967), while Clive Bell found what he considered to be its essential nature in "significant form" (Bell 1914). All such attempts to identify universal features of art share an element in common: they presuppose or posit the existence of a fundamental human nature, a set of characteristics, including interests and desires, uniformly and cross-culturally present in the constitution of human persons. In aesthetics, the emphasis on a stable

human nature has been taken to entail two further ideas: first, that artistic activity of some kind will be a predictable component of any society (as predictable as, for instance, the use of language, the making of moral judgments, the existence of family organization and the regulation of sex), and second, that art will itself have predictable content identifiable cross-culturally (just as unrelated languages possess similar syntactic features, kinship systems incorporate some kind of incest avoidance, and moral rules usually forbid in-group homicide).

This universalist conception therefore regards art as a natural category of human activity and experience. This is not in itself a new idea, but goes back to the greatest naturalist of Greek philosophy, Aristotle. He argued that we could expect to find similar arts (by which he also meant technologies) being invented in independent human cultures all over the world. In discussing various ways in which the state had been divided into classes by cultures of the Mediterranean, Aristotle makes his view clear in an aside:

> practically everything has been discovered on many occasions – or rather an infinity of occasions – in the course of ages; for necessity may be supposed to have taught men the inventions which were absolutely required, and when these were provided, it was natural that other things which would adorn and enrich life should grow up by degrees.
>
> (Aristotle 1987, *Politics* 1329b25)

As the existence of these arts and technologies sprang from a shared human nature, Aristotle further believed that their basic forms would also display similarities: so genres of spoken narrative and literary arts would everywhere evolve comedic and serious or tragic forms, there would be carvings, pictures or other representations, and, as with the development of Greek tragedy, these art forms would become more complex over time.

Aristotle regarded the visual and dramatic arts as naturally mimetic, in some manner representing something, whether in words, marble or paint. He viewed the human interest in representations – pictures, drama, poetry, statues – as an innate tendency, and he was the first philosopher to attempt to argue, rather than simply assert, that this is the case:

> for it is an instinct of human beings from childhood to engage in imitation (indeed, this distinguishes them from other animals: man is the most imitative of all and it is through imitation that he develops his earliest understanding); and it is equally natural that everyone enjoys imitative objects. A common occurrence indicates this: we enjoy contemplating the most precise images of things whose actual sight is painful to us, such as forms of the vilest animals and of corpses.
>
> (Aristotle 1920, *Poetics* 1448b)

Aristotle's frame of reference for generalizations was specific to ancient Greek culture, but it is impossible to dispute the claim that children everywhere play in imitation of their elders, each other, even animals and machines, and that such imaginative

imitation appears to be a necessary, or at least normal, component in the inculturation of individuals. The other side of Aristotle's mimetic naturalism holds that human beings everywhere enjoy seeing and experiencing imitations, whether pictures, carvings, fictional narrative or playacting. For Aristotle, the child's fascination with a doll's house with its tiny kitchen and table settings is not to be reduced to a desire for adult power, but in its imitative play is based in the instinctive delight in representation as such. This pleasure, he argues, can be independent of the nature of the subject represented: that is why the sight of a large, black fly walking over ripe fruit might disgust us in the kitchen, but can be a source of delight in a meticulously painted seventeenth-century Dutch still life.

A concept of naturalism akin to Aristotle's, but without its specified content, was advocated in the eighteenth century by Immanuel Kant and David Hume. Kant claimed that judgments about artistic beauty, which he called "judgments of taste," are more than expressions of merely personal, subjective liking: they have the necessary property of demanding universal agreement from the rest of mankind (Kant 1987). While Kant's aesthetics treats the demand for universality as a purely logical feature of judgments of taste, he also thought that there was a uniformity of human nature that validated the demand. He called this the *sensus communis*, or shared human sense. The pleasure of beauty for Kant derived from the way in which the experience of a beautiful object engaged the harmonized activity of the imagination and rational understanding in what he called disinterested contemplation, that is, experience of the object cut off from the merely personal and idiosyncratic desires and preferences of the individual. If I receive aesthetic pleasure from a Beethoven sonata, my affirmation of its beauty implies the notion that all other human beings, were they in my position as listener, should agree. Kant's idea of the uniformity of human nature requires this implication, despite the fact that, as Kant also realized, in actual life there is frequent disagreement on questions of beauty: there are too many personal and cultural variables which affect aesthetic judgments to expect agreement in all cases.

David Hume, in his 1757 essay, "Of the Standard of Taste," also acknowledged disagreements in questions of evaluating beauty (Hume 1987). He nevertheless held, not unlike Kant, that "the general principles of taste are uniform in human nature." It is such uniformity, in Hume's view, that makes it possible that the "same Homer who pleased at Athens and Rome two thousand years ago, is still admired at Paris and London." While we may be temporarily blinded by fashion or prejudice to the value of classics such as the Homeric poems, we will sooner or later see their beauties, "which are naturally fitted to excite agreeable sentiments" in human beings of every epoch. The best works of art pass Hume's so-called test of time because they appeal to a human nature that remains constant in different cultures and in different historic periods.

Empirical psychology and universalism

In the twentieth century, research into the existence of universal aesthetic values came primarily from psychology and anthropology. Although the speculative psychological

theories of art in the work of Freud and Jung no longer excite scientific interest, the same cannot be said for more empirically based psychology, especially work centered on perception. D. E. Berlyne's *Aesthetics and Psychology* (1971) summarized the state of psychological aesthetics and has inspired considerable research since it was published. Following Berlyne, Colin Martindale has conducted many experiments attempting to establish universal patterns of stylistic change in art (Martindale 1990). In a varied series of studies conducted since the late 1960s, Martindale and his colleagues have shown that artistic change in all cultures rests not on an instinctive "will to innovate" but rather on a universal human desire to avoid repetition and boredom. The craving for novelty is based on well-known psychological principles of habituation, the principle that predicts the tenth mouthful of an interesting and delicious food will not be as piquant as the first, that people will sometimes change perfectly adequate wallpaper, and that ten Vivaldi concertos in a row may well prove tedious. Martindale calls habituation "the single force that has pushed art always in a consistent direction ever since the first work of art was made" (ibid.: 11). It is the universal mainspring of artistic change.

Among many cross-cultural examples adduced by Martindale is the evolution of similes in French poetry. In the eighteenth century, André Chénier wrote, "Beneath your fair head, a white delicate neck / Inclines and would outshine the brightness of snow." The connection between the white neck and snow might have struck its original audience as fresh; the connection is certainly closer than one found in Laforgue's later line that the sun "lies on top of the hill … like a gland torn out of a neck." Sun and gland are more remote images, but not as far apart as the relations given in two still later lines from André Breton: "I love you opposite the seas / Red like the egg when it is green." This increase in metaphorical distance – outlandishness – is an example of "a historical movement of similes and metaphors away from consistency toward remoteness and incongruity" (Martindale 1990: 21). This progression can be generalized as follows: in the arts, a form, genre or style is invented, and once established is gradually elaborated over time by increasing what Martindale calls the general "primordial content" of the style; its use of emotion, greater complexity and variability, more ornamentation. The "arousal potential" of the style or genre is gradually increased until some end point is reached where it is fully exploited. Attention then turns to the style itself, which is typically changed or abandoned in favor of a new style. The cycle repeats itself and this new style matures, again through the incremental increase of emotion, complexity and so on. Though Martindale does not refer to Aristotle's evolutionary sketch of the history of Greek tragedy, Aristotle's account – increasing numbers of actors, the introduction of painted sets, complexity of plotting, language and costuming – fits his theory, and so, Martindale is able to demonstrate, do the histories of British, French and American poetry, American fiction and popular music lyrics, European and American painting, Gothic architecture, Greek vases, Egyptian tomb painting, pre-Columbian sculpture, Japanese prints, New England gravestones, and various composers and musical traditions. As audiences become satiated, artists increase the psychic impact of art forms by turning up the volume, increasing density of words, vividness of images, making things more emotional, erotic or shocking. The history of movies bears out Martindale's hypothesis well, with general increases in violent and erotic content for the last century. Similar

patterns can be seen in the history of music in the progression from baroque to classic to Romantic to modern.

The most recent research on universal features in art has come out of evolutionary psychology, which attempts to understand and explain the experience and capacities of the human mind in terms of characteristics it developed in the long evolutionary history of the human species. Evolutionary psychology postulates that human pleasures, such as the pleasures of sex or the enjoyment of sweet or fatty foods, have their genesis in evolutionary history: our ancestors who actively enjoyed sex and consumed fats and carbohydrates survived and left more living offspring than those who did not. The same argument can be applied to countless other aspects of the emotional dispositions of human beings, including, for example, responses to human faces and comportment, or to the threats and opportunities presented by the natural world and its flora and fauna. The argument can also be applied to art and its content.

Studies of human reactions to photographs of landscape habitats show patterns which are stable across cultures (Orians and Heerwagen 1992). Given a series of photographs, older children and adults familiar with a wide variety of landscape types showed no pattern of preference for any one type of landscape (scenes included tropical, deciduous and coniferous forests, desert and East African savannah). Young children, however, demonstrate a preference for open savannahs, even when the children had never seen such landscapes in real life. This predisposition survives from the adaptive history of the early ancestors of contemporary humans, whose emotional responses to the natural world were adaptively formed in the Pleistocene savannahs of East Africa. It is an expression of a general human tendency to prefer landscapes combining open spaces and trees (preferably trees that fork near the ground and so offer escape from predation), water, green flora, flowers and variegated cloud patterns.

These preferences received unexpected confirmation when two artists, Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid, gained financial backing to conduct an extensive, systematic poll of the art preferences of people of ten different countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas (Wypijewski 1997). Their poll recorded surprisingly uniform interests in the pictorial content of art worldwide. The most favored color was blue, followed by green. Generally, people expressed a liking for realistic, representative painting, with water, trees and shrubbery, human figures (women and children preferred, or historical figures) and animals, especially large mammals, both wild and domestic. Komar and Melamid used the poll findings as the basis for producing paintings: an *America's Most Wanted* painting and one for each of the nine other countries. The works had obvious tongue-in-cheek elements (the American painting showed children, George Washington and a hippo beside a lake), but they were accurately in line with the poll results, tending to resemble each other, and moreover to resemble much standard calendar art, photographic or painted, of outdoor scenes. In commenting on the poll and their work, Arthur Danto has suggested that the fact that the Komar and Melamid paintings looked like realistic European landscape or calendar art, rather than resembling the indigenous art of any of the countries where the poll was conducted, demonstrates the international power of calendars to form and influence conventional artistic taste and content preference. Kenyans, Danto notes, preferred an art that more resembled a realistic Hudson

River School landscape than any recognizable African style; they also tended according to the poll to have calendars in their homes (Danto 1997: 134). Danto's explanation, however, begs the wider question: Why do calendars worldwide feature landscapes that match the very content evolutionary psychology would predict? The answer to that question may well be the evolutionary psychology hypothesis which posits a Pleistocene genesis for such basic pictorial interests.

Another realm of uniformity of content is in narrative fiction. It has been said that the themes and subjects of literature are limitless. While this may be true in principle, in actual fact most world literatures tend to return a limited list of abiding vital human interests (Carroll 1995). These prominently include questions of life and death, sex and love, conflict in social relations, exploration, adventure, and struggle and success in overcoming adversity. Aristotle had already noted the tendency for tragic narrative to focus on the disruption of family relations: a mortal dispute between two strangers will be of lesser interest compared to a story of two brothers who fight to the death (*Poetics* 1453). Indeed, conflict within families is one of the most persistent themes in literature, from the Greek tragedies through Shakespeare, the Hindu epics, Chinese and Japanese literature, down to this afternoon's television soap operas.

Joining a long line of philosophic speculation that goes back to Plato, the linguist Steven Pinker has argued that drama and fictional narratives have didactic or instructional value for life. Stories are a way to explore strategies and scenarios for social and family relations and the general challenges of life before they are faced in reality: a kind of practice for living (Pinker 1997). If the basic adaptive value of storytelling for human beings was as practice for survival and reproduction, it should not surprise us that the prevalent, universal themes of the history of literature should also involve questions of survival and reproduction: sex, love and death, as they would impinge on the life of a protagonist and his or her kin.

The interest in identifying such grand universal themes in literature may be granted, but it is hardly the whole story of art. The content of art which evolutionary psychology both partially predicts and partially explains as universal is not peculiar to high or fine art in any cultural tradition: this content is continuous with the content of the most mundane instances of storytelling, gossip, news-gathering (including criteria of what counts as news), household decoration, craft traditions, popular entertainments such as television dramas or sentimental fiction, tourist snapshots and postcards, sporting and patriotic events, landscaping of public parks and private gardens, and on and on, into virtually all areas of life and experience. So what of the so-called high arts? Ellen Dissanayake has theorized that the deepest aesthetic experiences bring together elements that are layered in the aesthetic response to art objects, performances and occasions. These include the appeal of basic experiential qualities (such as sparkling lights, vivid colors or arresting rhythms); the incorporation of such experience into rituals and activities which have a power to unite people in a sense of common purpose or shared emotion; the achievement of what she calls "evocative resonance," a feeling that there is deep and rich meaning embedded in the experience; and "satisfying fullness," the feeling that in the art experience something complete and significant has been accomplished by the percipient (Dissanayake 1997). The sense of intense social involvement in the experience of art is emphasized

by Dissanayake, along with the fact that artworks of all kinds offer ways in which human beings can enjoy the pleasure putting to work their powers of discrimination and evaluation. The systematic application of these latter capacities, along with extensive knowledge of an art form, becomes connoisseurship.

Universal features of art

Given all that cross-cultural investigation has so far accumulated, it is possible to list the signal characteristics of art considered as a universal, cross-cultural category. The features that follow are not necessarily criteria for the presence of art; on the other hand, it would be difficult to imagine a social practice that was characterized by most of them which was not art in some sense. Every feature on the list is, however, also present in nonart experiences and activities; reminders of these are included in parentheses.

(1) Expertise or virtuosity. The manufacture of the art object or execution of the artistic performance usually requires the exercise of a specialized skill. This skill may be learned in an apprentice tradition in some societies, or in others may be picked up by anyone who finds that she or he "has a knack" for it. Where the skill is acquired by virtually everybody in the culture, such as with communal singing or dancing in some cultures, there still tend to be individuals who stand out by virtue of special talents. Technical artistic skills are noticed in societies worldwide and are generally admired. (The admiration of a recognizable skill extends to all technical areas of human activity where its presence is made apparent, from cooking to public oratory to marksmanship. In modern society, sport is a major area where technical virtuosity is publicly admired and rewarded.)

(2) Nonutilitarian pleasure. Whether narrative story, crafted artifact, or visual and aural performance, the art object is viewed as a source of pleasure in itself, rather than as a practical tool or source of knowledge. The embodiment of the artwork may be in some respect useful: a tool (a shield, a knife) or a means to information (a sacred poem). Aspects of the embodiment, however, give pleasure in experience aside from these practical or informational/communicative considerations. (This pleasure is called aesthetic pleasure when it is derived from the experience of art, but the pleasure of sport and play, or of watching larks soar or storm clouds thicken, could equally be "for its own sake.")

(3) Style. Art objects and performances, including fictional or poetic narratives, are made in recognizable styles, according to rules of form and composition. The degree of stylistic determination varies greatly, as much in premodern cultures as in the arts of literate civilizations. Some art objects and performances, typically those involving religious practice, are rightly circumscribed by tradition, while others are open to free, creative, individual variation. A style may derive from a culture, or a family, or be the invention of an individual; styles involve borrowing and sudden alteration, as well as slow changes. (Style is an element in almost all cultural activities beyond art, from language use to table manners; it is crucially but not uniquely important to art.)

(4) Criticism. There exists some kind of indigenous critical language of judgment and appreciation, simple or elaborate, that is applied to arts. This may include the shop talk of art producers or evaluative discourse of critics and audiences. Unlike the arts themselves, which can be immensely complicated, it has often been remarked that this critical discourse is in oral cultures sometimes rudimentary compared to the art discourse of literate European history. It can, however, be elaborate even there. (The development of a critical vocabulary and discourse, including criteria for excellence, mediocrity, competence/incompetence and failure, is intrinsic to almost all human activities outside art.)

(5) Imitation. In widely varying degrees of naturalism, art objects, including sculptures, paintings and oral narratives, represent or imitate a real and imaginary experience of the world. The differences between naturalistic representation, highly stylized representation and nonimitative symbolism are generally understood by artists and their audiences. (Blueprints, newspaper story pictures, passport photographs and road maps are equally imitations or representations. While imitation is important to much art – notable exceptions being abstract painting and music – its significance extends into all areas of human intellectual life.)

(6) "Special" focus. Works of art and artistic performances are frequently bracketed off from ordinary life and made a special and dramatic focus of experience. While there are plenty of mundane artistic objects and performances (such as decorated parts of Baule looms or communal singing done to pass the time while mending fishing nets), every known culture has special artworks or performances which invoke what Dissanayake (1997) calls "making special." These objects or performance occasions are often imbued with intense emotion and sense of community. They frequently involve the combining of many different art forms, such as chanting, dancing, body decoration and dramatic lighting in the case of New Guinea sing-sings. (Outside art, or at its fringes, political rallies, sporting events, public ceremonies, such as coronations and weddings, and religious meetings of all sorts also invoke a sense of specialness.)

(7) Finally, the experience of art is an imaginative experience for both producers and audiences. The carving may realistically represent an animal, but as a sculpture it becomes an imaginative object. The same can be said of any story well told, whether ancient mythology or personal anecdote. A passionate dance performance has an imaginative element not to be found in the group exercise of factory workers. Art of all kinds happens in the theater of the imagination: it is raised from the mundane practical world to become an imaginative experience. (At the mundane level, imagination in problem solving, planning, hypothesizing, inferring the mental states of others or merely in daydreaming is practically coextensive with normal human conscious life.)

Relativism versus universalism

In the generations that have followed the Second World War, humanistic scholarship has tended to emphasize the cultural context of all human activities. This has meant that in aesthetics, as much as in popular ethics and social theory, relativism has

become a dominant orthodoxy: aesthetic values were understood as having their reality only relative to local cultural and historical conditions. A good work of art was therefore "good" only in a specific culture; cross-cultural standards were thought impossible to ascertain. A dismissive attitude toward universal values in art has been bolstered by countless anecdotes seeming to illustrate the cross-cultural unintelligibility of the arts. One such oft-repeated story concerns the Indian sitarist who, performing before a naive Western audience, was vigorously applauded when he had finished tuning his instrument.

As mentioned earlier, theories of universal aesthetic value, which are dead set against absolute relativism, go hand in hand with hypotheses about the universal nature of human beings; supporters of aesthetic relativism have therefore been generally hostile to such accounts. Scientific theories of human nature have been branded "essentialist," and have been portrayed as potentially limiting human creativity and freedom, or as having elements in common with racist varieties of biological determinism used by fascist ideologues in the first half of the last century. The rejection of universalism, and with it the acceptance of culture as the ultimate determinant of aesthetic value, has also been seen by relativists as a way to oppose the notion of a European superiority in cultural value.

Aesthetic relativism, although adopted with the best of intentions, has blinded investigators to the elements arts have in common worldwide. Not every putative cross-cultural misunderstanding can be turned into a general denial of the possibility of universal aesthetic values. It is important to note how remarkably well the arts travel outside their home cultures. Beethoven and Shakespeare are beloved in Japan. Japanese prints are adored by Brazilians, Greek tragedy is performed worldwide, while, much to the regret of many local movie industries, Hollywood films have wide cross-cultural appeal. As for sitar concerts, anyone who has sat through the tedious tuning of a sitar might well want to applaud when the music was finally set to begin. And even Indian music itself, while it sounds initially strange to the Western ear, can be shown to rely on rhythmic pulse and acceleration, repetition, variation and surprise, as well as modulation and divinely sweet melody: in fact all the same devices found in Western music.

A balanced view of art will take into account the vast and diverse array of cultural elements that make up the life of artistic creation and appreciation. At the same time, such a view will acknowledge the universal features the arts everywhere share, and will recognize that the arts travel across cultural boundaries as well as they do because they are rooted in our common humanity.

See also Empiricism (Chapter 4), Kant (Chapter 5), Definitions of art (Chapter 21), Art and evolution (Chapter 27).

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27
ART AND EVOLUTION

Mohan Matthen

Is the human capacity to make and appreciate art an evolved trait? In other words: Does it have a genetic basis that emerged by evolution? Is it an adaptation to the human natural or social environment? These are the questions to be surveyed in this chapter. I will review how art is universal across human cultures, and argue that this constitutes a case for evolution. I shall then inquire into *how* art could have evolved. This inquiry is shaped by how one conceives of art.

The universality of art

Art has extremely ancient origins. The *impulse* to produce perhaps antedates *Homo sapiens*, for hand axes made by *Homo ergaster* 1.5 million years ago display symmetry unrelated to function. And "modern humans" at Enkapune Ya Muto in Kenya made strings of well-shaped beads from ostrich eggshell as long as 40,000 years ago. This was an extremely delicate and difficult process, again unrelated to function. While these artifacts seem to lack the stylistic marks of their individual makers, and are hence more like craft than art, they nevertheless display a "disinterested" – this term will be explained presently – regard for appearance that is the hallmark of art.

Among modern humans, art is a cultural universal:

(1) Every culture, no matter how isolated, sings, dances, tells stories, erects monuments and decorates.
(2) Every culture draws visual patterns that exploit regularity, repetition and enclosure.
(3) In every culture, there are codified styles or genres that govern each such activity.
(4) In every culture, there are connoisseurs who appreciate formal skill in these activities – skill in execution that goes beyond the primary appeal of works in these media. For example, while the tune and the beat of a musical performance give pleasure to almost all who share in the culture, there are always specially knowledgeable consumers who value aspects of the performance that are not evident to all – fine control of dynamics, ornamentation, syncopation, breath control, phrasing and so on.
(5) At least some artworks in every culture carry a kind of augustness or specialness that more quotidian artifacts lack. These are highly worked and made from

expensive, rare and specially treated materials; they are kept in hallowed places; possessing them is symbolic of power and wealth; they are associated with communal occasions on which daily work is suspended for musical or dramatic performances; etc. Ellen Dissanayeke (1992) makes this specialness a defining characteristic of art, and it is certainly true that every culture makes at least some art objects special in these ways. (One qualification: the specialness accorded to an artwork must manifest itself in its *creation* and *form*. The millionth Mickey Mouse watch might be placed in a museum: this would not make it an artwork.)

(6) Most individuals appreciate *some* genres within every broad form of art. It is a recognized disability, for instance, not to appreciate *any* form of music, and surely the same must be true of visual art and drama. And most can recognize an artwork as such: for as Noël Carroll (2004) says (echoing a remark of Stephen Davies), "Europeans can recognize a statue of Ganesha as an artwork without being able to know its symbolic import." What is more, Europeans do not require much effort to appreciate the beauty of such foreign objects. Similarly, it is evident to us that the cave drawings at Lascaux are art, though they were created 20,000 years ago in a context completely unknown to us. (A qualification: recognition of artworks is far from infallible. A member of an isolated tribe might take a Mickey Mouse watch to be an artwork, noting its colorful design and elaborate mechanical movement.)

Art and human nature

The universality of art cannot be understood *just* by unique origin and cultural transmission. It is possible that there was a first visual artwork from which all subsequent visual art descended. (This would be analogous to the invention of potato- and wheat-washing by a single female Japanese macaque, Imo, and the subsequent imitative transmission of the practice within her troupe.) But even if this was so, art, technology and language are parts of a suite of cognitive capacities associated with the emergence of *H. sapiens*.

Colin Renfrew remarks:

> [I]n the early days, when our species was beginning to differentiate from earlier ancestors such as *Homo ergaster*, it was not simply the innate genetic capacity … to conceive of and make artifacts that was important … The know-how of making and using those artifacts was not passed on genetically … It was learned … In what we may term the *speciation* phase of human development, up to around one hundred thousand years ago, genetic and cultural co-evolution must have been an important mechanism, operating for more than a million years.
>
> (Renfrew 2007: 80–81)

Renfrew's reference to "genetic and cultural co-evolution" is meant to suggest that the human species differentiated itself from its predecessors (and thus became a

separate species) in part by evolving the capacity to teach and to learn sophisticated culture. Since it was a condition of belonging to early human groups that members participate in culture, cultural transmission became a part of evolved human nature. As a consequence, humans became innately capable of learning to appreciate and execute complex artistic styles. Further, on the plausible assumption that the enjoyment of art is a prerequisite for learning it, it must also be of the historical essence of *H. sapiens* that its members are capable of aesthetic appreciation. The single-origin hypothesis presupposes these capacities to appreciate and learn; it does not eliminate them.

The argument just given has been vigorously contested. As Carroll notes, "many in the humanities" (and in anthropology, one might add) contest the universality of "art" on the grounds that *art* is itself a culture-bound concept. One way to develop this critique derives from Kant's strictures on "judgments of taste," which are concerned with aesthetic qualities such as beauty (and ugliness). Kant says that judgments of beauty depend on the kind of pleasure we derive from the "mere representation" of something. This excludes the subjective sensation of pleasure that an object causes in us – for the latter depends on the actual existence of the object and not just on its perceptual representation. Kant's view is a theoretical elaboration of Hume's simpler observation that judgments of taste are felt to be normative in force: their assertoric force implies that those who disagree are somehow deficient or wrong (Guyer 2006).

Consider Buckingham Palace. I may have a sybaritic desire to partake of its comforts. I may also be appalled by its extravagance and be seized of a socialist impulse to convert it into a utilitarian government office. These attitudes are premised on the actual existence of the palace, for only by existing can the palace either provide comfort or commit the sin of waste. According to Kant, my judgment that Buckingham Palace has aesthetic qualities must, by contrast, be premised on its perceptual representation alone, and independent of the kinds of pleasure that can only be caused by a real object. Consequently, aesthetic judgment must be motivationally inert. "A judgement on beauty in which the slightest interest mingles is highly partisan and not a pure judgement of taste" (Kant, *Analytic of the Beautiful*, §2).

The Hume–Kant view of aesthetic appreciation assumes a certain kind of detachment – to say that something is beautiful is to step back from its contribution to subjective interest and motivation. This is the kind of conception of beauty (and, by implication, art) that serves as the starting point for the arguments of Carroll's humanists. The disinterested contemplation of art is *not* a cultural universal, they say. It is culture specific. As well, some think that human culture is a free creation, and thus a historical contingency. It is a mistake, they think, to attribute culture to "our genes." (Pinker 2002 rebuts this view at length.) In fact, these critics say, disinterested contemplation is a European (or possibly high-civilization) invention of recent origin.

These arguments for the culture specificity of the art concept are unconvincing. The first rests on a questionable assertion, namely that the production of objects for disinterested contemplation is of recent origin. Consider medieval European religious art. A Christian worshipper of the early fourteenth century may have derived spiritual benefit from contemplating a painting by Giotto, and she may even have thought of the painting primarily as an object of religious interest. But in exactly the same way, the Queen of England may think of Buckingham Palace primarily as

home. This does not imply that the Queen is incapable of deriving disinterested pleasure from the palace. So, why should we not allow the medieval worshipper the same capacity? If she did not have this capacity, why would Giotto have paid such attention to nonreligious features of his painting? Extend this argument: why should we disallow the same for a tribesman who derives courage from totemic representations?

In any case, such symbolically loaded productions do not exhaust art in any culture. Domestic decorative art is universal, and it is capable of giving disinterested pleasure wherever it occurs (Gombrich 1979) – indeed, it is hard to see what other kind of pleasure it could give. (On the face of it, the beads found at Enkapune Ya Muto must have given pleasure simply by virtue of their regularity and delicacy – whatever other significance they may have possessed.) To summarize: while it may be true that disinterested contemplation (and related concepts) only recently became an explicit principle of art education, the attention to nonfunctional detail in art across all cultures demonstrates that it was always an implicit value.

The argument against genetic determination is of dubious relevance. *Every* species, including *H. sapiens*, has a characteristic way of dealing with its ecological niche. If it did not, it would not speciate – i.e. separate from its predecessor species – by the creation of physiological, psychological or ethological barriers to reproduction. As Renfrew notes, cultural teaching and learning are essential parts of how humans differentiated themselves from their immediate predecessors. This is not to embrace an objectionable form of genetic determinism: the hard-wired capacity to transmit culture from one generation to the next is compatible with a great deal of cultural plasticity. Specific cultural content varies a great deal from society to society. As noted, each culture codifies styles and genres, and of course each has its own narratives, which derive from its history and geography. But none of this gainsays the universality of stylized artistic production as such. Hume and Kant may have denied that the norms of beauty and art were culture specific. My point here is that it is possible to disagree with them on this point while still agreeing that the sense of beauty itself and art are universal.

Is art adaptive?

A more substantial controversy concerning the evolution of the capacity for art turns on whether this capacity is *adaptive*. A faculty (or trait) is *adaptive* if it gets evolutionarily established because of a reproductive advantage that it confers on its bearers. It is a *spandrel* if it is not adaptive, but gets established because it piggybacks on another faculty that is adaptive. A commonly given example is the human chin. Chins do not perform a function that confers a reproductive advantage on their bearers (or so it is said); they are formed simply as the meeting points of two other adaptive facial structures. Chins get established because these other structures get established, and the chin continues as their meeting point. Steven Pinker (2002) claims that art is a spandrel in this sense: it "is a by-product of three other adaptations: the hunger for status, the aesthetic pleasure of experiencing adaptive objects and environments, and the ability to design artifacts to achieve desired ends" (405).

The second in Pinker's list of "three other adaptations" – the "aesthetic pleasure of experiencing adaptive objects" – is significant. Certain kinds of objects are good

for us because a reproductive advantage accrues to those who use them in the right way. We desire them, and they give us "aesthetic pleasure," because we have evolved to exploit such objects for the advantage they afford. For example, sex is adaptive when it results in the production of fit offspring. Consequently, we find persons who would produce fit offspring attractive. This is the basis for sexual attraction – or so the theory goes. This is the kind of "aesthetic pleasure" that Pinker is talking about. Along similar lines, Denis Dutton (2009: 21) writes (crediting Jay Appleton):

> Humans like a *prospect* from which they can survey a landscape, and at the same time they enjoy a sense of *refuge*. A cave on the side of a mountain, a child's tree house, a house on a hill, the king's castle, the penthouse apartment, and a room with a view are situations with appeal.

Pinker's suggestion is that it is adaptive to take pleasure in adaptive objects, and that art is a nonadaptive accompaniment to this pleasure (given certain other faculties).

Play and aesthetic pleasure

Aesthetic pleasure does not derive only from the nature of adaptive *objects*. Certain perceptual *activities* are beneficial to the perceiver. When we scan a scene, certain visual patterns indicate object boundaries, and are hence grouped together. Here is a simple example:

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It is easier to see this as a series of "()"s than as one of ") ("s. The reason is that the former pattern looks like a partially occluded enclosure, where as the latter looks like parts of two different objects. Visual scene analysis makes extensive use of this kind of pattern detection. Consequently, it is beneficial to us, starting from a very early age, to practice finding these patterns. This activity (one may speculate) becomes a form of perceptual play.

Visual play is delight taken in the obsessive, but meaningless, detection of patterns indicative of noncoincidental groupings in visual scenes. It is adaptive because it develops perceptual skill. Perceptual play underlies what E. H. Gombrich (1979) says is the "sense of order" conveyed by repetition, symmetry, grouping and enclosure in decorative art, a sense, he says, of something meaningful and permanent in scenes. Along similar lines, V. S. Ramachandran and W. Hirstein (1999) claim that we have a natural tendency to attend to exaggerated versions of familiar and significant patterns and shapes. Here too, the detecting and attending to such exaggerations evolve into a form of useful play. Significantly, this kind of exaggeration is characteristic of at least some artistic representations in many (if not all) cultures.

Much the same sort of point holds with regard to temporal patterns. A rhythmic pattern (for example, a regular drip-drip-drip of water, or a regularly repeated bird call) strongly suggests a single source, since it is improbable that two independent sources would spontaneously synchronize in this manner. By the reasoning offered

above, it becomes a beneficial form of perceptual play for a perceiver to focus on simple rhythms. This goes some way to explaining why rhythm is so attractive to us. The aesthetic response of rhythm extends beyond music. Walter Koch (1993) argues, for example, that certain patterns of tension and relaxation are universally appealing in literature because they resonate with internal rhythms. Moving to a related phenomenon, harmonies too are signs of coordination in the world. Harmonies consist of distinct tones that are indicative of a common cause; it is unlikely that they arise by coincidence. People sing in harmony by intention; natural objects emit them by virtue of their form and structure. It is sometimes claimed that resonances in the basilar membrane of the ear explain why certain musical harmonies are pleasing; auditory scene analysis gives us an idea why it is useful to pick up and play with these harmonies.

Again, bodily dexterity develops through skilled play. Birds and mammals develop the skills they need to capture prey or avoid predators by the seemingly pointless exercises of flight and locomotion that we recognize as play. Humans have a unique repertoire of bodily skills – manual dexterity and voice control among them – that are developed, similarly, by nongoal-oriented play. The delight that we naturally take in such activity is one of the bases of artistic skill.

The spandrel theory of art says that it affords us no reproductive benefit in itself, though it exploits stimuli that are pleasure giving because they are beneficial. The relationship of aesthetic pleasure and perceptual as well as bodily play throws this into question. For it is problematic to argue that certain kinds of perceptual play are beneficial, while at the same time denying that the creation of objects that invites these very activities is beneficial.

Adaptation and the nature of art

Perhaps the biggest failing of the spandrel theory is that it relies on a simplistic view of both beauty and art. With respect to *beauty*, it does not differentiate *aesthetic* pleasure from other sorts of pleasure that we take in adaptive activities or objects. Sexual attraction is an excellent example. Though it falls under the broad rubric of desire for something adaptive, *sexual desire* is clearly not an aesthetic attitude. Kant's analysis of judgments of taste shows why. It is one thing to appreciate, for instance, Leonardo's geometrization of the human figure; this appreciation is "disinterested" in that it is an appreciation of the "mere representation" and implies no desire. It is quite a different thing to feel sexually aroused by gazing upon a real person or a picture. Arousal is motivationally potent and, in this sense, creates personal interest. It has, moreover, no Humean normative force: if I sexually desire somebody, I do not feel *you* to be wrong or deficient because you do not. By contrast, appreciating the geometrical properties of Leonardo's representations of humans does not create in me a motivation to possess or otherwise interact with the human thus represented. And I *can* criticize you for not noticing and appreciating this visual device.

Nor does the spandrel line of thought do justice to the peculiar character of *art*. It claims, for example, that because we appreciate certain kinds of landscapes, we also appreciate paintings of them. But this ties the value of art far too closely to the value

of real environmental objects. Pornography illustrates this perfectly. The depiction of sexually charged scenes elicits sexual desire. This, no doubt, is concomitant on the adaptive desire to participate in situations of the type depicted. However, pornography is not art! Similarly, not every realistic depiction of pleasure-giving landscapes is art. Nor is every pleasant or emotionally evocative series of harmonies or rhythms art music. (If it were, why would Beethoven be greater than Johann Strauss?) The conclusion that we must draw from these examples is that art has essential characteristics that transcend its pleasure-giving characteristics. Any explanation of art, evolutionary or cultural, must explain the universality of these transcendent features. This is where the spandrel theory falls short. (For a different view of the failure of the spandrel theory, see Stephen Davies 2010.)

The self-regarding nature of art

So what is art? What is it exactly that we are trying to explain? Recent philosophical treatments of this question have been greatly complicated by certain recent developments. For example, I suggested at the beginning of this chapter that art universally requires skill and that it is made according to the dictates of a particular style. This sort of generalization is severely tested by developments in twentieth-century art. For instance, Marcel Duchamp displayed a common urinal in a museum under the title *Fountain*. The creation of this object took no skill on his part – it was already made. Moreover, it conformed to no artistic style – it was a utilitarian object and while its display in museums conforms to certain institutional conventions, these conventions have nothing to do with art.

Fortunately, we can ignore these developments. It is not our purpose here to define art (which poses the problem of giving a definition that comprehends both the *Venus de Milo* and *Fountain*). We are concerned, rather, with the characteristics that made art an adaptation (or a spandrel) in evolutionary history. To do this, we need only consider the impulses and faculties that led to the creation of art objects in the distant past (and which still happen to motivate many artists in all cultures). We need not take recent modifications of artistic style and genre into account.

Artworks are objects of judgments of taste. This is something they share with natural objects. But crucially, *how* art evokes disinterested pleasure is itself something in which we can take disinterested pleasure. Consider Caspar David Friedrich's famous painting of a lone man in a frock coat contemplating mountains rising above the fog. The painting depicts actual mountains. These mountains are objects of disinterested pleasure. But *how* they evoke disinterested pleasure is not a matter of disinterested pleasure. One may, of course, note that they are beautiful because of their height, steepness and snowy face. But their beauty is not (even partially) constituted by the fact that these are the features that evoke disinterested pleasure. With respect to the painting, however, the "means" by which Friedrich evokes disinterested pleasure are themselves matters of disinterested pleasure. How distance is portrayed by color; the composition of the mountains; that "the wanderer's position atop the precipice and before the twisted outlook is contradictory, suggesting at once mastery over a landscape and the insignificance of the individual within it" – all of these things are objects of disinterested pleasure.

Art is *essentially* and *necessarily* self-regarding: it affects us in a manner that *requires* us to take into account the means by which it affects us. Style plays a mediating role here: the aesthetic appreciation of art includes attention to how it employs a particular style to create aesthetic pleasure.

Viewed in this way, art has a structure reminiscent of games. According to Bernard Suits (1978), games have two kinds of goal. The so-called "prelusory" goal is something like putting the ball in the net in soccer, or getting to the top of Mount Everest in mountain climbing. But the goal has to be achieved in a certain way, that is, in accordance with the rules of the game. In soccer, for instance, you can't simply carry the ball in; in mountain climbing, you can't take a helicopter to the top. Suits says that games are defined by a "lusory" goal, which is to achieve the *prelusory* goal in accord with the limitations set by the rules of the game. It is particularly noteworthy here that achieving the goal in a difficult manner is *play*; it is useful to us because it develops our skills. Consequently, evolution has made it delightful.

Similarly, art has a primitive, or precultural, goal – the creation of objects that have aesthetic qualities. The accounts sketched above of the origins of aesthetic qualities are all relevant, though one could also hold that some aesthetic qualities are culture-specific. But art demands *in addition* that this goal be achieved in a certain way, namely by making the *means* of eliciting aesthetic pleasure an object of reflexive aesthetic pleasure. Usually, this is achieved in part by producing objects in (loose) accordance with a style, where the style is not merely a codification of effective means to producing aesthetic appreciation. (A style is a changing set of standards, and good artists almost always violate or modify some rules of their chosen style.) Just as in games, the rules constrain how the prelusory goal is achieved, so in art, style constrains how the precultural goal is achieved. The play that is involved in such otherwise pointless constraint is adaptive and delightful because it develops perceptual and motor skills.

The self-regarding, style-conforming structure of art holds of all the forms of activity mentioned at the start of this entry. Hand axes were made in a symmetrical teardrop shape 1.5 million years ago. In isolated tribal societies such as the Pacific Northwest Salish people and Australian Aborigines, art takes a recognizable and highly codified form. Style and formal skill are attributes of art in every human society; connoisseurs prize works because they recognize these stylistically dictated attributes. The universality of this kind of self-regarding activity calls for explanation. Why do humans everywhere engage in this kind of activity? Why do they appreciate it? Why do they have a powerful attachment to it? These questions invite an answer in terms of adaptation. It is a special feature of art and cannot be explained in terms of what we find in other activities.

Evolutionary explanations of art

It should be said that any evolutionary theory of art is bound to be highly speculative. There is no good empirical method of estimating the fitness advantage bestowed by the art capacity. All that is possible here is to tell a plausible tale. So one might ask: What is the point of giving an evolutionary account? Why is it of any value? The

response to such a challenge can only be that even a highly speculative account tells us something about the nature of art and human nature. Some might go further and say that spinning an evolutionary tale is an exercise in mythmaking. It is more about constructing a self-image than about giving a historically accurate account. Though I do not take such an extreme view, I have to concede that it contains a measure of truth.

With this caveat, let us proceed. There are four broad avenues that an evolutionist can travel in search of an account:

(1) *Art is not an adaptation.* One could hold, as we have seen, that art has no adaptive value. Either it is a spandrel that arose because it is concomitant on other adaptive traits or it is a mere accident of evolutionary history. Given what has been said about the nature of art, this seems unlikely. Art appeals to disinterested pleasure and displeasure. But it does so in a way that is self-regarding and difficult to achieve – for by accepting the constraints of style, it makes the achievement of disinterested pleasure more difficult. This self-imposed constraint is inefficient and a detriment to fitness. So there must be something of evolutionary value in the acceptance of this constraint that overcomes its initial disadvantage. The self-regarding constraint must have compensatory adaptive value.

(2) *Art is individually adaptive.* Individual adaptations are those that help an individual cope with her environment in an efficient way. Consider human bipedalism. It is sometimes said that standing on two legs allows *each* human to use their hands for purposes other than to get around. An efficiently bipedal human individual does better than one who either isn't bipedal or isn't efficiently so. On this account, bipedalism is an individual adaptation. Is art an individual adaptation in this sense? I have suggested that it could be, since art, regarded as a kind of play, develops skills that are useful in coping with the environment.

(3) *Art is sexually adaptive.* Sexual adaptations are features that help an individual be selected as a mate. Sexual selection involves two parties, one the mate *selector*, the other the *competitor* for selection. (Often, females are cast in the role of selectors and males are seen as competitors, but in principle, there is no reason why sexual selection should be asymmetric. Every organism could be regarded as simultaneously playing both roles.) The sexual adaptation premise is that art creation and/or art acquisition give competitors an advantage with regard to being selected as a mate. This thesis takes three forms.

   (a) *Race-for-the-top selection.* Competitors develop an exaggeration of a perceptually salient trait as a display that attracts selectors. Since competitors continually have to outdo others, the display becomes more and more pronounced until either the species goes extinct because of the cost of maintaining the display or some sort of equilibrium is reached. The antlers of the Irish elk are cited as an example of sexual selection leading to extinction, and the tail of the peacock as an example of equilibrium. Art creation could be thought of as a display of this sort: artists get attention by showing off their skill; collectors show off by expending their economic resources.

   (b) *Waste selection.* Competitors engage in wasteful consumption of resources to demonstrate excess fitness (which gives selectors a reason to choose them).

Art is wasteful consumption. (Denis Dutton 2009 adopts this view; for a sympathetic critique, see Matthen 2011.)

(c) *Meeting-the-bar selection.* In many species, competitors engage in a complicated song or dance, the successful performance of which requires a functional contribution of many parts of the genome. The ability to execute such a routine shows that all the relevant parts of the genome are healthy. It is advantageous for selectors to reject unsuccessful performers because the chances are that they have unhealthy genomes. It could be held that art is a highly complicated activity and its successful performance demonstrates a healthy genome. This could be just one way to demonstrate a healthy genome: symmetrical bodily appearance, successful performance at sports, and effective high-level social command are other ways of demonstrating the same thing.

(4) *Art is group adaptive.* Art has a maladaptive aspect for individuals, since it is inefficient. One standard way for evolutionists to account for individually maladaptive traits is to appeal to "group selection." Morality is an example: it demands that individuals sometimes take a prudential disadvantage. However, it is argued that groups that respect morality are stronger and protect their members better than groups that do not. Individuals gain evolutionary fitness by being members of such groups. An analogous account could be given of art. Some hold that art promotes group solidarity, and thus advantages those who belong to art-loving groups. Another approach takes note of the division of labor in most human societies. The more a group divides labor among specialties, the more successful it is. In such groups, given that there is a demand for art, there is room for artists.

Summary

Complex and specialized human capacities are needed for the creation, transmission and appreciation of art. The universality of art suggests that these human capacities are innate, hence evolved. The disputed question is whether art capacities give humans an adaptive advantage themselves, or are simply associated with other adaptive capacities. Some theoretical treatments of this question assume that evolutionary treatments of the sense of beauty will suffice to account for art. But this neglects the fact that art, being constrained by style, is an inefficient way to create things of beauty. This shows that art capacities must have some adaptive value, if only to compensate for their inefficiency. Individual, sexual and group selection have all been invoked to account for this adaptive value.

See also Empiricism (Chapter 4), Kant (Chapter 5), Aesthetic universals (Chapter 26).

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28
VALUE OF ART

Matthew Kieran

What is it for something to be valuable as art? Why is good art important? These are two of the most important questions in philosophical aesthetics. But to see how we may answer them we must delineate what kind of value we wish to capture. Artworks can be valued in all sorts of ways. I may value a work because of its commodity value, sentimental value or historical value, or because it tells me things I did not know. Yet valuing a work for such reasons is only contingently related to its value as art. I may, after all, learn something from a work that is bad art.

Kinds of valuing

A standard approach, as articulated by Budd (1995), contrasts instrumental with intrinsic value. If we value a work instrumentally, it is merely a contingent means to a particular end. To value Bach's Cello Suites just because they cheer me up implies that they are replaceable by something that performs the same function as well or better, whether it be a feel-good movie or a night out. However, to find intrinsic value in a work is to appreciate the imaginative experience it properly affords, which may be beautiful, moving, uplifting, pleasurable, insightful or profound. But it is the particular nature of the work that guides our active mental engagement and responses to it. Hence there is something about the experience of a particular work, if it is intrinsically valuable, that cannot be replaced by any other.

Consider Barber's Adagio for Strings. In terms of technical musical complexity the piece is relatively simple and yet in terms of expressivity it is a great piece of music. The haunting melody expands in an emotional arc from the initial melancholic stirrings of the cello through to the increasingly sharp, highly pitched straining dissonances of the violins. Then we return back down to the lower reaches of the cello, now backed up by violins to give the refrain added substance and depth. It is no coincidence that the Adagio for Strings has been used for state funerals and as the thematic music for Oliver Stone's *Platoon*. The piece of music may not be *about* anything in the strict representational sense, yet its expressive development moves between melancholy, grief and reconciliation.

Now, another piece of music may well be expressive of the affective attitude of melancholic reconciliation but not in the very particular way that Barber's Adagio is.

Hence good artworks are not dispensable in the way drugs are. How the effect is caused in the case of drugs is beside the point and independent of our will. But in the case of art the experience is a result of our active mental engagement with the work. So quite what and how something is conveyed is not wholly specifiable independently of particular features of the work.

Despite its initial appeal, such an account is open to challenge. There is some reason to be skeptical of claims about the intrinsic value of artworks (Stecker 1997, 2010). Stecker's thought is roughly this: if we value something because of the experience it affords, then we value it because of the end realized. This implies that the value of art is instrumental. We do not value works for their own sake but because they enable us to realize certain ends such as pleasurable experiences. However, a distinction between two different types of instrumental value is required. To value something in *purely* instrumental terms is to value it solely as a means to the end it realizes. Consider, for example, money. Money as such has no value except in terms of those states of affairs it enables us to realize and its relationship to those ends is an external one. The means of acquisition in the case of money plays no part in shaping or constituting the nature of the ends realized. Similarly, it might be thought that some drugs induce pleasurable states by virtue of certain causal powers, but how the state is arrived at is external to why the end state is considered desirable. By contrast, there are many things we value instrumentally, in terms of the ends realized, which are not like this at all. For something to possess *inherent* value it must not only be the means to a valuable end, but also the means must partly constitute and thus be internal to the ends involved. The pleasures afforded by sport, coffee drinking and good conversation are not wholly specifiable independently of the nature of the objects or activity involved. Just think, for example, of how one goes about explaining the interest of sport to the uninitiated. One might start by claiming that such things give pleasure, but rapidly one must appeal to how and why pleasure arises in ways intimately bound up with the nature of the activity. One cannot specify the kind of pleasures involved in watching football, say, without describing how the game gives rise to the confrontation of combating teams, the kind of individual skills that can be deployed, the tactical guile and acumen often required, and how a pass can be elegant and beautiful in its exquisite timing. So too with good art generally.

Although Budd recognizes that we cannot specify the value of artworks without reference to a rich characterization of the ways they afford us valuable experiences, nonetheless, Stecker claims, the value is not intrinsic. We value such activities, watching sport or engaging with art, by virtue of the general ends they realize. We do not value them in purely instrumental terms, for the means involved in art partly constitute and shape the nature of the ends. Nonetheless, the value of art must be cashed out in terms of the ends realized. Thus the inherent value of art is a distinct form of instrumental value. Perhaps some of the values of art are more instrumental than others, though such an approach would need to spell out with care what is involved in appreciating works as art. The recognition that works often have multiple functions has led some to claim that what matters is the extent to which a work's aesthetic or artistic features contribute to the realization of its primary function (S. Davies 2005).

So far we have been talking as if the value of artworks is *always* a matter of the value of the experiences afforded. Although this kind of empiricism about artistic value is common, from Hume writing in 1757 (1993) through to Budd (1995) and Goldman (2006), there are reasons to doubt that it is true (Sharpe 2000; Kieran 2004; D. Davies 2004, 2005; Shelley 2010). It may be tempting to cite conceptual art here, where the experience afforded seems beside the point. We do not have to go to a gallery to see Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, an ordinary urinal turned upside down and signed "R. Mutt," to get the joke. But the nature and status of conceptual art is controversial. A stronger consideration is that the meaning afforded by a work is not always reducible to the nature of the experience afforded. Another reason is that a fake or forgery may afford as valuable an experience as an original, yet we would naturally rate the original more highly. Why? The original is the genuine expression of a unique artistic style and vision. Hence it is a particular kind of achievement. The fake or forgery merely apes the original's outward show. Another point is that early works in artistic movements are often not as complex, interesting or sophisticated as later ones. This is hardly surprising given that at the outset artists are trying to get to grips with the development of new ways of doing things. Hence early cubist works are often less visually compelling than later ones. Yet we often rate them more highly because they were among the first to develop that particular style.

A form of enlightened empiricism could respond that the reason for such valuations is still indirectly related to the value of the experiences afforded (Levinson 1996b). The meaning of a work is necessarily tightly tied to a suitably informed experience of it. Furthermore, originals or early works in a movement are valued highly because of their influence. They enabled artistic developments to occur which tended to produce works that are highly valuable in terms of the experiences afforded. Nonetheless, it still assumes that all the achievement and meaning properties of an artwork can be captured in terms of the experiences afforded a suitably informed spectator. This may be so for many or most artworks. Yet there is reason to doubt this will always be the case. For not all art is essentially a communicative act, nor is the nature of all artistic achievement constituted in terms of experience (Kieran 2004). A private sketch may be drawn in order to vent feelings, crystallize an artistic interest or refine certain skills. It may never lead to further developments that yield works or movements affording highly valuable experiences. Nonetheless we may value it highly because of the imagination, creativity or qualities of mind manifest in the sketch.

Aestheticism and the distinctive pleasures of art

The dispute over whether art's value is intrinsic or inherent belies a deep dispute in aesthetics over the value of art. The tendency to talk of the intrinsic value of art is the upshot of a tradition stemming from Kant (1928), according to which the pleasures of art should be conceived as being of a very distinct kind: aesthetic ones. Just as we admire the line, colors and complexity of form in nature – its aesthetic qualities – so too in art. Art is a cultural practice geared toward the intentional production of artifacts that are graceful, elegant and beautiful thus giving rise to pleasure in our

contemplation and savoring of them. The possible media, shaping and content of artworks provide a proliferation of distinct aesthetic pleasures that nature or everyday objects cannot afford. True, our appreciation of many of the aesthetic qualities of art depends upon background beliefs about particular artistic categories, genres, forms and artistic intentions. But as long as we have the right kind of understanding, the value of a work as art lies in its rewarding with pleasure the contemplation of its aesthetic virtues, independently of any further end or goal.

It is important not to conflate this general line with the simplistic presumption, articulated by Clive Bell, that only the formal qualities of a work count (Bell 1914). Sophisticated aestheticists, such as Beardsley (1958), recognize that form is not necessarily wholly independent of content. In a representational work, how the colors or imagery have been worked and juxtaposed is significant for what the work is doing, the shaping partly constitutes the content and the content guides the shaping. Consider Picasso's *Weeping Woman*. The paint representing the woman's fingers slashing across her face and the teardrop acidically gouging her face involves complex interrelations between the work's form and the way such form coheres with, and conveys a representation of, a particularly vicious form of grief. Appreciating the work as art does not involve delighting in the represented woman's grief as such. Rather we delight in the way in which the form of the work is an aesthetically artful and apposite means of portraying such grief. Hence the aesthetic value of an artwork, by virtue of the interrelations between its formal aspects and thematic content, inheres in its unity, complexity and intensity. Thus, Peter Lamarque and Stein Olsen argue (1994), we must keep distinct the cognitive, fictive and aesthetic aspects of a work. We derive pleasure from attending to how artfully the content of a work is conveyed. The content of a work is relevant to a work's value as art, but only as an indirect side effect. As such, the message of a work or what it represents is irrelevant to the value of a work as art. Sophisticated aestheticism holds that a work's content is relevant to its value as art if and only if the content promotes or hinders the attainment of aesthetic virtues, such as coherence, complexity, intensity or quality of development, by the work's aesthetic aspect.

The aestheticist's account of art's value has several key virtues. First, it seems to capture why the value of an artwork is not reducible to its message. As a schoolboy, my grandfather was once awarded a book entitled *Ernie Elton: The Lazy Boy*. Although the ten tales contained therein are undoubtedly worthy, each constituting a moral fable about the dangers of various vices, as literature it is of the crassest kind. Yet a work by Dante may *ex hypothesi* have exactly the same message and, by virtue of its poetic workings, be of the highest value as art. Good art is not replaceable by something that merely replicates its content in terms of moralizing, history, sociology or philosophy, because of its aesthetic features, which is what we are concerned with in appreciating something as art.

Second, aestheticism enables us to explain, by emphasizing the need to distinguish a work's fictive, cognitive and aesthetic aspects, why we can appreciate as art, works whose content we disagree with vehemently. Two art-loving friends may disagree about the truth or pernicious falsity of Catholicism, and yet both deeply appreciate as art Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. Aestheticism gives a neat account of exactly how and why this may be so.

Third, aestheticism marks art appreciation out as a very distinctive kind of activity. For engaging with something as art involves attending to the artistic working and maximization of aesthetic features. Thus the nature of art proper is distinguished from mass culture. Mass culture is typically a commercial product that merely aims to please in terms of diverting entertainment, or is didactic in pushing some moral or political message. But merely being absorbing, in the way soap operas are, or didactically striving to communicate a message, as in much propaganda, is insufficient for something to enter the realm of art. Where cognitive concerns predominate, everyday culture cannot hope to rise to the level of art, for the goals and purposes of mass-cultural artifacts are indifferent to the promotion of aesthetic features. Art has as its autonomous goal the promotion of aesthetic values, to which all other considerations are subservient. Hence aestheticism makes sense of a distinction oft drawn between the high or fine arts and mass culture by emphasizing the distinctness of aesthetic aims or pleasures.

Yet as a complete account of artistic value, such a tradition faces severe problems. First, consider conceptual art. Conceptual art often, though admittedly not always, is distinctly lacking in aesthetic qualities. In much conceptual art, such as Duchamp's, the experience of the work often seems to be beside the point and concerns the recognition of a given idea. Hence, it might be objected, not all good art affords the putatively required aesthetic experience.

The aestheticist can deny that conceptual art is a problem. Jenny Holzer sewing the slogan "war is bad" on to a camouflage baseball cap creates nothing of aesthetic worth. This explains why many people, rightly according to aestheticism, consider conceptual art to be worthless as art. It may turn out that, accidentally, certain pieces of conceptual art possess aesthetic value, and where they do so, they are to be valued as art for that reason. But where such value is lacking, such art is at best very bad art indeed. Perhaps some antiaesthetic conceptual art changes, alters or sharpens the ways in which people attend to the aesthetic qualities of artworks. So conceptual art, where it lacks aesthetic value, can at best be something akin to art criticism, but not itself valuable as art.

A more fundamental objection arises when we consider works whose value we take to be diminished due to their content, independently of their aesthetic virtues. Standardly, professional critics and ordinary appreciators alike use critical terms such as "sentimental," "implausible," "profound," "insightful," "callow," "naive," "malicious," "strident" or "simplistic." Such evaluations, as Rowe (1997) points out, often directly concern a work's content and how we are prescribed to understand it. Renoir's portraits are aesthetically coherent, yet our appreciation of them is diminished by their cloying sentimentality. Evaluations of a work as art must sometimes make reference to concepts such as truth, an appeal that aestheticism is at pains to rule out.

There are moves an aestheticist can make in response to such a line of thought (Lamarque 2006). Yet a sharp division between the purely aesthetic value of a work and the nature of the experience afforded in terms of its emotional depth or cognitive understanding looks difficult to maintain. A work may be aesthetically appealing, artfully contrived and thus absorbing. If a work is exceptionally absorbing and artful in its construction, it may well be great art, for not all great art is serious or profound in terms of its content or emotional resonance. But, importantly, where a work is properly deemed profound we consider it to be a virtue of the work as art. The

artistry and appeal of the narrowly aesthetic features of two works may be the same, and yet where one is merely absorbing and the other cultivates genuine insight, we naturally consider the latter to be better as art.

This leads on to another worry concerning the putatively sharp separation between high art and mass culture, for such a strict divide is out of step with the actual development of art. Far from being independent of nonaesthetic purposes, art has typically been produced to serve a variety of purposes, whether the form of patronage be religious, public, private or commercial. The flattery of patrons, provision of propaganda and focus on material reward that were the purposes of the work of Joshua Reynolds, Eisenstein and Hollywood, respectively, did not preclude them from producing great art. Whether or not a work of art is produced need not depend upon whether the primary purpose of creation is the promotion of artistically worked aesthetic features or the promotion of moral insight, religious worship or the provision of housing for Lloyd's insurance underwriters. Nonetheless, perhaps the problems arise from overly formalist-influenced conceptions of the aesthetic. It could be that aestheticism only requires a more moderate articulation (Zangwill 1999) or a broader conception of the aesthetic (Shelley 2007).

Cognitivism and art as craft

A distinct tradition, stemming from Aristotle (1986), conceives of art as a craft closely tied to much else we value in other activities and human practices. The creation and reception of art are conceived of as a cultural practice that has evolved to realize, albeit peculiarly well, certain cognitive-affective values. In particular this approach is closely tied to cognitivism, the view that the primary value of art concerns the ways in which works enrich how we understand ourselves and the world. Aristotle was reacting to the notorious condemnation of art by Plato (1974). Plato held that art cultivated the baser affective aspects of our souls, so overriding the proper control of reason and thus leading us away from what is true and good. Aristotle argued that art was to be highly valued as a craft and that this is so, contra aestheticism, not because the goals of art are distinct in kind from other activities, but because art can realize particularly well certain cognitive-affective ends we properly value in other activities. Richard Beardsmore suggests (1971) that according to this line of thought, aesthetic virtues only distinguish the means by which art can realize peculiarly well its cognitive-affective goals. For example, both philosophy and art may deepen our understanding of the human situation, but what is distinctive about art, as opposed to philosophy, is the means by which it seeks to do so.

A standard cognitivist presumption is that art is a communicative act. How this then plays out depends on distinct theoretical emphases. For example, following Walton (1990) we may conceive of representational artworks as typically promoting, through the use of artistically manipulated conventions, particular imaginings about a given state of affairs. Thus art may expand our cognitive horizons in ways we otherwise would not have realized: art may enable us to see our world in new ways. Travel may well broaden the mind, but it is expensive and dangerous. By contrast, to travel through the imaginative lands evoked by artworks is relatively cheap, safe and its pleasures are more easily forthcoming.

A different way of going (Adorno 1994) is to equate the value of art with confronting or challenging our preexistent beliefs and understanding. Still, as Carroll (1998) points out, this may be atypical. Art often deepens preexistent understandings by drawing out the implications of already held presumptions. *Brideshead Revisited* may convey the attraction and human costs of belief in Roman Catholicism, but this may be an enrichment of something previously understood rather than a fundamental alteration in belief. Artworks often revivify impressions or understandings we have already, by foregrounding in peculiarly vivid and striking ways aspects of ourselves, others or the world. This explains why, for example, we value Shakespeare's plays so highly, and why we return to such works again and again. The poetic aspect would be hollow and unaffecting if it were not so tightly intertwined with a deep and profound exploration of the nature of humanity.

Cognitivism enables us to underwrite the presumption of art's significance, for good art is not just grounded on a distinctive kind of pleasure. On the aestheticist's account it is difficult to explain why art is of greater significance than other kinds of pleasures we get, whether they be playing pinball or coffee drinking. As Jerrold Levinson (1996a) notes, art would seem to rate poorly in terms of hedonic return. But on this view, good or great art is far from merely decorative or beautiful: it engages with our cognitive-affective attitudes to, and understanding of, the world. It follows from this, on the craft conception of art, that the aestheticist's distinction in kind between high art and mass culture is deeply flawed, for the difference between soap opera and Dickens, say, is one of degree. As I have argued (Kieran 1996), something is of high value as art to the extent that, through the artistry deployed, it manages to vivify, deepen or, exceptionally, modify our understanding of such things. This explains why it is that we evaluate artworks in terms of their truth to life. If a work is sentimental then it is flawed, for essentially it gives a naive and flawed mischaracterization of that which it is seeking to represent to us.

Nonetheless, worries remain. First, such an account may be viciously reductive in equating the value of a work as art to what it may reveal about the world. *Lord of the Flies* may illustrate the Hobbesian nature of mankind but if this was why we valued such works as art, then surely they would be equally replaceable by works of philosophy or psychology that articulated such views. Indeed two artworks may afford the same cognitive insight, and yet one may be poorly and clumsily written while the other's poetic imagery is beautiful, complex and appealing. The difference in artistic value of the two works as art cannot be a cognitive matter. The cognitivist is confusing what art may incidentally illustrate with what its distinctive value is, which concerns its aesthetic aspect. Furthermore, perhaps the cognitivist is assuming, falsely, that we can gain knowledge from works as art – whereas perhaps all the works do is reflect our prejudices and knowledge gained from elsewhere (Stolnitz 1992).

There are at least two ways a cognitivist may respond. First, as Martha Nussbaum (1990) argues, perhaps there is a distinctive kind of knowledge and understanding that can only be conveyed imaginatively. Propositional knowledge, of the kind involved in philosophy, psychology and history, can tell us things such as that an event happened, how and why human beings have a certain sociopsychological makeup, or how practical reason may be linked to moral motivation. But what such abstract, principled reason cannot tell us concerns the phenomenology of what it

feels like to have certain emotions or attitudes to others and, indeed, to see what is morally required in our relations with others. Such knowledge is a matter of imaginative perception unamenable to principled reason. Hence art can afford us imaginative acquaintance with certain truths that more formalized cognitive activities cannot. However, such a strong claim is highly contentious in presuming that certain kinds of knowledge are inherently particularist, a claim many would want to deny.

By contrast, a second response claims only that there are different means or avenues to knowledge. *To Kill a Mockingbird* may afford the same kind of understanding of racism, the need for tolerance and humanity that principled reason may. Art is just a particularly valuable way of conveying such an understanding through engaging our cognitive-affective responses, as Gaut (1998, 2007) argues. Works often engage our imagination with characters we identify with and so get us to care deeply about certain truths or insights in ways pure reason rarely does. One need not hold that only art can convey certain truths, but rather that the artistic means employed enable art to do so peculiarly well in a nonabstract, affective fashion. Hence if the artistic means utilized are poor, clumsy or impoverished, then a work has failed to realize the cognitive-affective value of art, for we are then unlikely to care about or take much interest in whatever cognitive insight is implicit in the experience the work affords.

A second objection focuses on whether cognitivism could capture the value of art as a whole. Still-life studies, portraits, abstract visual art, certain kinds of sculpture and pure music do not obviously have any significant cognitive content at all, and yet we may appreciate many instances of them as great art: something cognitivism seems unable to account for.

One possible move is to deny that such works have little or no cognitive value. Superficially, Vermeer's realism, as in *The Little Street*, may seem to consist in the painterly delineation of bricks, mortar and houses with the odd figure going about ordinary household activity. But once one starts to take in the blank, mute facades, closed doors, empty windows, and occasional figures of whom we can only identify their external activities, an impression builds up both that there is interior life and yet that we cannot know the exact nature or content of that interior life in virtue of mere appearances. This is itself a putative insight into how difficult it may be to fully understand others – what a person is thinking and feeling cannot straightforwardly be read off from observing their behavior. Similarly, apparently contentless abstract art, pure music or sculpture may be expressive or concern fundamental ways in which we perceive the world. Furthermore, artworks generally need not be cognitively valuable just in terms of what they represent, show us or express. Good art often rewards our capacities for discriminating between and appreciating elements of experience and may exercise or cultivate our epistemic character in many ways (Kieran 2004; Lopes 2005; Landy 2012).

Lastly, if cognitivism were sound, the objection goes, it would be deeply puzzling as to why we rate highly works that we take to cultivate a flawed or overly partial understanding of the world. We may admire Francis Bacon's portrayal of humanity as rotten, corrupt and diseased, value his work highly as art, and yet think such a conception of humanity fundamentally mistaken. Yet if cognitivism were sound, surely we would have to consider Bacon's work to be of little value.

A cognitivist may respond, with Harrison (1991), that truth or knowledge as such is irrelevant. What matters is whether the understanding prescribed by the work is interesting, complex and expands our imaginative horizons. These are the cognitive virtues proper to art, since they pertain to vivifying imaginative possibilities: and whether such possibilities are true or not is neither here nor there, since that is a matter for whichever discourse the envisaged possibilities are properly assessed within. Rather than assert claims about the world as such, art may just engage and offer criteria for making judgments, e.g. *Othello* may show us something about what it would be for judgments of racism to be justified, though it does not show or assert that the world is racist (Gibson 2007). A slightly stronger retort, as articulated by Gordon Graham (1997), involves the claim that truth as such does matter, but truth is only one of many cognitive virtues. After all, something may be true but banal. There is a range of cognitive virtues – profundity, insight, complexity, interest, coherence, consistency, truth to life – and it is in terms of all of these that the value of a work is assessed. Hence, on either the weaker or the stronger retort, a work may have many cognitive virtues and be valued as such even where the possibilities envisaged are ultimately adjudged to be interestingly false. An atheist may still appreciate *Brideshead Revisited* as good art – while, on the stronger claim, possibly judging it to be defective to the extent that it commends that which, s/he holds, in the last analysis, should be condemned as false.

One striking explanation as to why these rival traditions have been competing for so long is that both contain important truths about the values of art. Each tradition seems more or less plausible depending on the kind of art one has in mind. Aestheticism speaks particularly to forms such as abstract art or pure music, while cognitivism most obviously applies to representational art. Conversely, one of aestheticism's virtues is its emphasis upon the importance of artistry in representational cases, whereas cognitivism has the virtue of stressing ways in which abstract art or pure music sometimes do have cognitive content. Perhaps the real problem concerns the ways in which two rival but partial accounts have attempted to generalize indiscriminately over all the arts to give an account of the value of art. Hence it would be more informative to concentrate on such questions in relation to particular art forms and genres. After all, to think one of the two rival traditions could hope to capture everything that is valuable about art, ranging across forms such as pure music, abstract art, sculpture, dance, literature and film, and down to genres within a particular form such as light comedy, satire, tragedy and documentary, would appear hopelessly ambitious.

See also Plato (Chapter 1), Aristotle (Chapter 2), Kant (Chapter 5), Formalism (Chapter 9), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Art and knowledge (Chapter 37), Art and ethics (Chapter 38), Fakes and forgeries (Chapter 45).

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29
BEAUTY

Rafael De Clercq

Throughout most of the history of aesthetics, beauty was *the* property to be studied, and often this property was regarded as consisting in harmony. By the middle of the twentieth century, beauty had become merely one item on a long list of aesthetic properties, along with the sublime, the picturesque, the dainty, the dumpy and countless others. Moreover, at least on the face of it, the evolution of modern art had cast doubt on the intimate relation between harmony and beauty. However, as has been observed by several writers (e.g. Brand 2000; Zangwill 2001; Brown 2010 [1998]) beauty seems to have made a comeback in recent years. The fact that the word "beauty" figures prominently in the titles of recent academic (Sircello 1975; Mothersill 1984; Brand 2000; Zangwill 2001; Danto 2003; McMahon 2007; Nehamas 2007; Parsons and Carlson 2008; Scruton 2009) and nonacademic (Eco 2004; Armstrong 2005) books in aesthetics may be regarded as evidence of beauty's reversal of fortune. It remains to be seen whether beauty's special relation with harmony will be reestablished in the process.

This story about the place of beauty in the history of ideas is familiar enough (see, for example, Beardsley 1973 [1968]: 207–8), but it tells us very little about the *nature* of beauty, which is the topic of this entry. To understand more about its nature, two questions will have to be answered. First, can "beauty" be defined, and if so, how? Second, what is the relation between beauty and the mind; for example, between being beautiful and being judged beautiful, or between being beautiful and being the object of pleasure? Various answers to these questions will be considered in the next two sections.

Definitions (and varieties) of beauty

The discussion in this section will be slightly hampered by the fact that, as many authors (Bradley 1999 [1909]: 38; Ducasse 1966: 234–35; Alexander 1968: 163–64; Beardsley 1973 [1968]: 208; Zangwill 2001: 11–12; Scruton 2009: 15–16) have warned, there may be an ambiguity in the word "beauty" as it is currently used. On the one hand, "beauty" seems to be used as a synonym for "aesthetic value," "aesthetic merit," "aesthetic success" and the like. On the other hand, it seems that "beauty" is also used to designate something more specific, namely, a particular way of achieving

aesthetic success. In this latter sense, beauty is generally taken to imply attractiveness or at least a kind of pure pleasure (in Scruton's words, "untroubled and consoling delight"; 2009: 16). However, even in this more specific sense, "beauty" is a very general or abstract term, the applicability of which is not tied to any particular category of entities, unlike, say, "horse," which in its literal sense applies only to animals (De Clercq 2005; Scruton 2009).

In the view of Renaissance architect and theoretician Leon Battista Alberti, "[b]eauty is that reasoned harmony of all the parts within a body, so that nothing may be added, taken away, or altered, but for the worse" (Alberti 1988 [1486]: 156; Tatarkiewicz 1974: 82, notes the influence of Aristotle). What this definition says is that beauty consists in a certain kind of harmony, one that is negatively affected by the slightest changes in respect of what parts make up the whole. The problems with this definition are not difficult to point out. (Alberti himself offered it merely "[f]or the sake of brevity" and did not expect it to capture the "precise nature of beauty"; 1988: 156. Nonetheless, his definition was influential.) Most strikingly, it relies on an unexplained notion of harmony, which is problematic since it is a near-synonym of "beauty" (at least in the sense in which Alberti uses the term). Furthermore, it does not seem to be true that a beautiful object can be altered only for the worse. It does not seem to be true even of a maximally beautiful object, since there is no reason why only one arrangement of (a particular set of) parts should be able to realize maximal beauty.

According to G. E. Moore, beauty is "that of which the admiring contemplation is good in itself" (accordingly, he defined ugliness as "that of which the admiring contemplation is evil in itself"; see Moore 1999 [1903]: 249, 256). This definition improves upon the previous one by not raising any suspicions of circularity. However, it still seems vulnerable to counterexamples. In particular, it is not clear how it distinguishes beauty from moral qualities. For example, the admiring contemplation of courage or generosity (in other words, virtue) seems just as good in itself as the admiring contemplation of beauty. In addition, one may wonder how the definition can distinguish beauty from other aesthetic properties such as elegance, harmony and gracefulness. However, this last objection may be less powerful than the previous one because it can be argued that these other aesthetic properties are forms of beauty.

Guy Sircello preferred to analyze what a "beautiful property" is rather than what a beautiful object is. Roughly, his idea is that a property is beautiful in an object if and only if, first, the object possesses the feature to a high degree, the degree not being expressible in precise quantitative terms, and second, the property is not a defect or the appearance of one, such as, respectively, being unhealthy and looking unhealthy (Sircello 1975: 43). Sircello's examples include the clearness of someone's skin, the mysteriousness of a dress, the vividness of an object's color and the clarity of a sound. The notion of a defect is left somewhat vague, but on any reasonable understanding of that notion, it seems that Sircello's definition is too broad. For example, the support of my computer screen is a vivid instance of some color or other, but neither the support nor its color is beautiful. Sircello's response to this kind of worry is that the color is beautiful in respect of its vividness, though probably not in other respects (1975: 31–32). However, the claim seems empty because it

is not clear what kind of experience could verify it. One can verify the claim that a car is beautiful in respect of its shape because one can attend to the shape and appreciate its beauty; and likewise for the color of the car. But it is not clear that one can attend in the same way to the vividness of a color in order to ascertain whether the color is beautiful in this respect.

According to Mary Mothersill, "[a]ny individual is beautiful if and only if it is such as to be a cause of pleasure in virtue of its aesthetic properties" (Mothersill 1984: 347). Aesthetic properties are in turn defined by her as those which are shared by perceptually indistinguishable items. This account is again inadequate for several reasons. First of all, although it is not entirely uncontroversial, perceptual indistinguishability is generally regarded as a nontransitive relation, meaning that there can be items *x*, *y*, *z* such that *x* is indistinguishable from *y*, *y* is indistinguishable from *z*, and *x* is *dis*tinguishable from *z*. The reason why this poses a problem for Mothersill's definition is that two *aesthetically* distinguishable items can be connected by a sequence of items each of which is *perceptually* indistinguishable from its two neighbors. If we follow Mothersill, all the items in the sequence should have the same aesthetic properties, but by assumption that is not the case. Furthermore, as Nick Zangwill (2005: 339) has observed, Mothersill's definition assumes that aesthetic properties are determined only by perceptual properties such as color and shape (since it is plausible to assume that perceptual properties determine whether items are perceptually distinguishable or not). However, in aesthetics, this radical "formalist" position is widely regarded as having been refuted by, among others, Kendall Walton (1970). In other words, it is now commonly assumed that perceptually indistinguishable items can have different aesthetic properties, for example, as a result of the intentions that were involved in their creation.

Admittedly, these are all problems for Mothersill's definition of "aesthetic property." Whether her definition of "beauty" succeeds when supplemented with a more adequate definition of "aesthetic property" depends, in part, on the relation between beauty and pleasure, which will be discussed in the next section. For now, let it be noted that her definition assumes that all objects of beauty can, in principle, be *causes* of pleasure. This is not evident in light of the fact that abstract objects such as theories, proofs, formulas and designs can be beautiful too (for a denial of this claim, see Zangwill 2001: ch. 8).

On the conception favored by Alan Goldman (1995: 23–24) and Nick Zangwill (2001: 12), beauty is a purely evaluative aesthetic property, and so identical to aesthetic value. Naturally, this conception can be turned into an enlightening definition of "beauty" in its wide sense provided that there is a definition of "aesthetic property" or of "aesthetic value." Although there are, again, no uncontroversial definitions of these terms, it would be premature to conclude that no definition works. Moreover, the "experiential account of aesthetic value," according to which aesthetic value resides in the kind of experience the object is capable of providing, has gained many adherents (Lewis 1946; Beardsley 1979; Iseminger 2004; Budd 2008c [2007]; Stecker 2006 – to mention but a few), including Goldman (Goldman 2006), and almost as many versions. The most important limitation of this approach, then, is that it can only lead to a definition of "beauty" in its wide sense.

As the above survey of definitions makes clear, there have been many attempts to define "beauty," and none of them has met with wide acceptance. Perhaps, then, one should be skeptical about the possibility of defining "beauty." However, such skepticism is all too easy unless one has tried to find the reasons why definitions of "beauty" have failed to gain wide acceptance. One reason may be the ambiguity mentioned in the beginning of this section, but this cannot be the only reason, because the ambiguity in question is easily resolved. Another reason may be that the word "beauty" does not stand for a single property (shared by all and only beautiful things) even when it is disambiguated along the lines set out above. Such radical ambiguity may in turn be explained by the fact that, as Renaissance philosopher Giordano Bruno observed, "beauty and goodness are one thing for one species, and another thing for another" (Bruno 1998: 149). In other words, what beauty consists in is different for different kinds of thing: a feature that is beauty-making in one kind need not be beauty-making in another kind, even if it can be exemplified by items of both kinds (Scruton 1979: 10). For example, facial hair may make a man more handsome, but it is highly unlikely to make a woman more pretty. This is one way of understanding Frank Sibley's claim that different kinds have different "ideals of beauty" associated with them (Sibley 2001: 188–89). Moreover, it explains why judging beauty is usually easier when one knows what kind of thing one is judging, and in particular, what are normal or functional instances of the kind. However, it does not warrant the radical conclusion that there is no single property of beauty, or in other words, that the word "beauty" is ambiguous, for example, between "human beauty," "natural beauty," "everyday beauty" and "artistic beauty" (varieties distinguished by Scruton 2009), or between "abstract beauty," "artistic beauty," "artifactual beauty," "natural beauty," "physical beauty," "moral beauty" and "accidental beauty" (varieties distinguished by Levinson 2011, who also lists subcategories of these varieties). Compare: the fact that the likely causes of death are different for different age groups does not warrant the conclusion that there is no property that all corpses share or that the word "death" is ambiguous. Similarly, the fact that different criteria of identity apply to different kinds of things does not mean that there is no single relation of identity. What is more, unless one assumes that the word "beauty" is unambiguous (in one of the two uses distinguished in the beginning of this section) it is unclear how to evaluate the statement that different kinds have different *beauty*-making features associated with them.

The fact, if it is one, that there is a single property, or a single concept, expressed by "beauty" should not be taken to imply that no account of "artistic beauty," "physical beauty," "functional beauty," and so on, can be given. (On functional beauty, see Parsons and Carlson 2008.) One can give an account of these varieties of beauty by, for example, citing typical beauty-making features among items of the relevant kind or by specifying the degree to which beauty can be exemplified by them (e.g. in terms of "minimal" or "maximal"). However, there is no reason to speak of a *kind* of beauty whenever such an account can be given. A proliferation of kinds of beauty is unnecessary and ill-advised if one wants to mean something substantial by "kind" (as seems to be the case in Levinson 2011). One way in which such a proliferation of kinds can be avoided is by sticking to the following rule: *K*-beauty constitutes a distinct kind of beauty only if exemplifying *K*-beauty is different from being a *K* and

being beautiful. For example, according to this rule, musical beauty constitutes a distinct kind of beauty only if (i) a musical piece, or a part of it, can be beautiful without having musical beauty; or (ii) a musical piece, or a part of it, can have musical beauty without being beautiful. The second possibility seems to be mysterious, but perhaps sense can be made of the first possibility.

In any case, it seems that skepticism about the definability of "beauty" cannot be justified by reference to any ambiguity in the term, and the same goes for its vagueness. After all, a definition can be vague too, and a precisifying definition may be desirable. Perhaps one could be skeptical because the notion of beauty seems a basic one (cf. Mothersill 2003: §8.2, 157). However, then the question is what is meant by "basic." If what is meant is merely that the notion plays a central role in aesthetic discourse, then there is again no ground for skepticism. For example, the notion of a graph is absolutely central to graph theory, but it is defined. Moreover, if by "basic" one means "primitive," then it is not clear on what basis one is going to decide whether "beauty" is basic. Aesthetic discourse is not a formal system in which some terms are assigned the role of primitives (i.e. undefined terms). Moreover, even if it were, there could be an alternative system in which the same terms are assigned a different role. After all, some terms are interdefinable, and "beauty" may be one such term.

Beauty's relation to the mind

Different people have different attitudes towards beauty, assigning it a more or less important role in their lives. Likewise, artists in different periods have had different opinions about the importance of beauty in art. In two recent books (Danto 2003; Scruton 2009), these changing attitudes, as manifested in various artworks, are described and explained. The authors of the books agree on the description, but not on the explanation. In particular, both authors agree that a conscious "repudiation" of beauty has taken place in twentieth-century art, but whereas Arthur Danto explains it, rather sympathetically, in political terms – as an expression of moral outrage vis-à-vis current affairs such as the First World War and the Vietnam War – Roger Scruton explains it, less sympathetically, in anthropological terms, specifically in terms of, or at least by analogy with, the pleasures connected with desecration.

Whatever may be the true explanation of such changing attitudes towards beauty, it is also widely agreed that beauty bears an unchanging relation to the mind by being essentially connected with certain sensations (e.g. pleasure), judgments, evidence or concepts. In what follows, these different ahistorical possibilities will be considered in turn. The guiding question will be whether there is an essential connection between, on the one hand, something's being beautiful (an apparently nonmental state of affairs), and on the other hand, someone's enjoying, judging, knowing or conceptualizing something (a mental state of affairs). Connections between mental states of which at least one involves the concept of beauty – for example, between pleasure and judging that something is beautiful – will be considered only to the extent that they bear on this primary issue. For this reason, there will be no discussion of, for example, Nehamas (2007), who argues that there is a special ("analytic") connection between finding something beautiful and loving it. (For a critical discussion of this theory, the reader is referred to Gaut 2010 and Budd 2011.)

Let us start with the relation between beauty and pleasure. That beauty is a source of pleasure seems to be an absolute platitude (Scruton 2009: 5). (Whether the pleasure in question is to be characterized as "disinterested" is another matter. See "Kant," Chapter 5 in this volume, for an elucidation of the idea that aesthetic pleasure is disinterested; and Zemach 1997, for criticism of the idea.) Yet beauty does not yield pleasure in some direct, physical way: it is not, at least on the face of it, a physical property (such as emitting certain electromagnetic waves) that could affect us without our being aware of it. So beauty is a source of pleasure only when we are aware of it. But now the suspicion may arise that the source of our pleasure is not beauty itself but a mental state involved in our awareness of it (see, for example, Kant 2000 [1790]). For example, when we are aware of beauty in our environment – when we perceive that a particular object is beautiful – we also *judge* something beautiful, and usually we also *perceive* it *as* beautiful. Judging something beautiful, and perceiving it as beautiful, are not the same as perceiving *that* something is beautiful. Only the latter type of state presupposes that the thing is in fact beautiful. In other words, it is a "factive" (Williamson 2000) state: one perceives that p only if it is a fact that p. By contrast, the first two states are nonfactive: one can judge something to be beautiful which is not beautiful, and one can perceive something as beautiful which is not beautiful. Now if at least one of these *non*factive states (e.g. judging that something is beautiful) can explain the pleasure we feel when we are aware of something beautiful in our environment, then it seems that we have no real reason to regard beauty itself as a source of pleasure. After all, the nonfactive states can also occur in the absence of beauty. What we would be left with, then, is not a connection between a non-mental state of affairs (something's being beautiful) and a mental state of affairs (someone's experiencing pleasure), but simply a connection between two mental states of affairs (e.g. someone's judging that something is beautiful and someone's experiencing pleasure).

However, it is questionable whether the nonfactive states can explain the pleasure we feel when we perceive that something is beautiful. For example, judging that something is beautiful is not itself a pleasurable state. As Malcolm Budd has argued, one can judge that something is beautiful – one can attribute the property of being beautiful – on the basis of testimony without experiencing the pleasure that may have accompanied the judgment at the origin of the testimony (Budd 2008b [2003]: 58; see also Livingston 2003). Perhaps it can also be questioned whether perceiving something as beautiful is always pleasurable. However, even if it were always pleasurable, this could not explain why perceiving that something is beautiful is always pleasurable. After all, perceiving that something is beautiful does not always involve perceiving something as beautiful. For example, one may perceive that a building is (was) beautiful on the basis of a photo or a drawing or a model, that is, without perceiving the building itself (the building may no longer exist). But the photo or drawing or model is not thereby perceived as beautiful (e.g. the photo could be mediocre or even bad qua photo). Consequently, even if it is a fact that perceiving something as beautiful is always pleasurable, it cannot be counted as more fundamental than the fact that perceiving that something is beautiful is always pleasurable. In sum, the nonfactive mental states we have been considering do not seem to be able to explain the pleasure we feel when we perceive that something is beautiful.

As a result, it is possible that the beauty of the perceived object is the real source of pleasure.

Leaving the relation between beauty and pleasure for what it is, let us turn to the relation between beauty and judgment. As was said above, one can judge something to be beautiful which is not in fact beautiful. However, authors influenced by David Hume's essay on the standard of taste (see, for example, Hume 1996 [1757] and "Empiricism" in Chapter 4 of this volume) have claimed that the judgments of "ideal critics" are bound to be true, where "ideal critics" are supposed to be knowledgeable (informed), impartial and discriminating in nonaesthetic respects. In other words, if critics satisfying these conditions judge something to be beautiful, then it is beautiful. Note that this is supposed to be an a priori truth, not an empirical claim. Using contemporary terminology, it is the claim that beauty is a *response-dependent* property: a property that things have in virtue of our responses (e.g. judgments) in "ideal circumstances." What has attracted many authors to this claim is that it seems to provide a middle way between objectivism and subjectivism: beauty is neither a property that exists entirely independently of the mind (objectivism, as found in many classical and medieval works) nor a projection of a subjective state such as preference or pleasure (subjectivism, as found in, for example, Santayana 2003 [1896]). In other words, on the response-dependent view, an aesthetic judgment such as "The Mona Lisa is beautiful" is *less* objective than a scientific description of the world (e.g. "A positron passes through the cloud chamber") but *more* objective than a report on one's personal feeling (e.g. "I like this"). The problem with the response-dependent view, however, is that there is no (a priori) guarantee that ideal critics will agree in their judgments. In other words, there is no (a priori) guarantee that they will get it right. Proponents of response-dependent theories of aesthetic properties have acknowledged this problem, and have attempted to solve it by allowing a certain degree of relativity. In particular, they have claimed that ideal critics are bound to be correct about what is beautiful *for their sensibility group* (see Goldman 1995 and Levinson 2006 [2001]). The problem with this modified account is twofold (see Budd 2008a [1999] and De Clercq 2008 for more detailed criticism). First, it is not obvious that beauty is relative to sensibility groups. Most judgments of beauty are expressed without explicit reference to sensibility groups, and one should not believe that there is implicit reference merely because it helps proponents of response-dependent theories make their claim come out as (a priori) true. Second, it seems that sensibility groups cannot be identified independently of the judgments that ideal critics actually make or would make. At least, neither of the aforementioned advocates of the notion has provided an independent criterion. In other words, the notion of a sensibility group seems to be a mere placeholder for whatever explains differences of opinion between ideal critics. Given that this is all the notion does there is no (a priori) limit on the number of sensibility groups except for a purely mathematical one. In other words, for all we can tell (a priori), any object can be judged differently – as beautiful or not beautiful – by ideal critics belonging to different sensibility groups, leaving the total number of sensibility groups roughly equal to 2^n, n being the number of objects that can be judged. This is subjectivism pure and simple because it implies that for any set of judgments one is inclined to make there is a sensibility group such that ideal critics in the group concur with one's judgments.

There is, then, no possibility of being mistaken about whether a particular thing is beautiful or not: there is always *some* sensibility group for which one gets it right and of which one can claim to be a member. But if this is the case, how can aesthetic judgments be more objective than reports about how one presently feels about something?

As noted, the notion of a sensibility group seems to function as a mere placeholder in the literature for whatever explains differences of opinion between ideal critics. However, in principle, one could refer to a certain kind of sensibility in explicating what an ideal critic is and so attempt to avoid the problem of divergent judgments. For example, one could say that an ideal critic is one who is knowledgeable, impartial, perceptually discriminating *and aesthetically sensitive*. However, if being aesthetically sensitive means that one cannot be mistaken about beauty, then it is a trivial claim that an object is beautiful if an ideal critic judges it to be so. (The notion of being aesthetically sensitive would be a mere placeholder for whatever enables critics to get it right.) And if being aesthetically sensitive leaves room for being occasionally mistaken, then the possibility of divergent judgments has not been excluded.

There are at least two more ways in which beauty can be said to bear an essential relation to the mind. Since they have not been discussed at length in the aesthetic literature, they will be only mentioned. One way is to say that all facts about beauty – facts about what is beautiful or not – can in principle be known. It is not obvious that this is true, since there are, in general, unknowable facts (see Williamson 2000) and it is hard to prove that they cannot have any bearing on whether this or that item is beautiful. An alternative is to say that there is an a priori guarantee that beauty is exemplified only if there is actually a concept of beauty (see De Clercq 2002). In other words, beauty is a *concept-dependent* property. Note that this does not have the implausible consequence that if there were no concept of beauty, then there would be no beautiful things. The thesis is not that, necessarily, beauty is exemplified only if there is a concept of beauty. The thesis is that it is an a priori truth that beauty is exemplified only if there is *actually* a concept of beauty.

See also Plato (Chapter 1), Medieval aesthetics (Chapter 3), Empiricism (Chapter 4), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Taste (Chapter 25).

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30
INTERPRETATION

Robert Stecker

When we interpret works of art and literature we are seeking to understand or to appreciate them. We do this by attempting to discover or ascribe on *some* basis, a meaning in or to the work in question, or to determine what significance the work has for us.

Around this feat of assigning a meaning or significance to a work of art, many controversies swirl. Some of these controversies will be systematically set out in this chapter. Before doing this, it is worth mentioning why these issues have seemed important enough and uncertain enough to generate so much controversy.

Consider this poem from William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*:

> The Sick Rose
>
> O Rose, thou art sick!
> The invisible worm
> That flies in the night,
> In the howling storm,
>
> Has found out thy bed
> Of crimson joy:
> And his dark secret love
> Does thy life destroy.

First note that there are aspects of the meaning of the poem that it would be natural to say we know prior to interpretation. For example, we know that the poem is ostensibly about a rose that becomes infested with a worm that destroys it.

We know there is more to the poem than such obvious facts, and that we will appreciate the poem only if we can come to some understanding of what this more might be. We also may have some specific puzzles about some lines or phrases in the poem. For example, why is the worm invisible? Is it literally invisible or perhaps barely noticeable? Why does it make its first "appearance" in a howling storm? Why is the vehicle of its destructiveness a "dark secret love"? We need, and for the moment lack, answers to these various questions. Whatever answers we give will result in meanings we find in or assign to the poem in giving an interpretation of it.

There are many views about what we *should* do and what we *may* do in answering these questions. Let us begin to examine these.

Actual intentionalism

One plausible starting point is to focus on the poet, and to see if what we can learn about him helps to answer the interpretive questions raised above about "The Sick Rose." However, there are different ways of doing this. One can engage in what can be called *biographical criticism*, in which one tries to learn as much as possible about the life of the poet and then tries to, as it were, read off the meaning of the poem from what was going on in the poet's life around the time of writing.

There are several decisive criticisms of this approach. There is no reason to suppose that poems, or more generally, artworks, are direct expressions of what is going on in artists' lives. Some works might be, but then again, artists may just as likely distance themselves from their lives when creating artworks. Further, this approach to answering interpretive questions tends to distance the critic from the work itself. It will be virtually impossible to find nonspeculative connections between a poet's biography and his or her writing those precise words. Finally, even if such connections were found between the poet's life and words, these are likely to be private connections and certainly ones that are inaccessible to most readers. This makes them poor candidates for meanings, which must be capable of receiving uptake from the poem's audience. Few artists would rely on such connections when creating works to be introduced into the public domain.

A more plausible approach is to ask what a poet (artist) is intending to do or convey with a poem (artwork). What was Blake's point in writing about the sick rose, in describing the worm as invisible, in making it first appear in a howling storm, in describing its destructiveness in terms of a secret love?

This approach is plausible because it reflects an important aspect of our explanatory stance when we are trying to understand human behavior and its products. We typically explain what people do and make by appealing to their beliefs and desires and the intentions they form in virtue of these. Why are you writing on that piece of paper? I'm filling out a withdrawal slip and am intending to use it to get money for the weekend. Notice it is common to use this explanatory approach when we are concerned with people's semantic doings, that is, when we are trying to understand what they are saying or writing. If we do not understand some part of a conversation, we are apt to say, "What do *you* mean?" Once we are clear on that, our interpretive goals are usually satisfied.

It is plausible to carry over the same strategy to answering the interpretive questions about "The Sick Rose" and other works of art. On this view, artworks are considered expressions of the actual intentions of their creators. Interpretations of artworks assert that a work expresses this or that actual intention, and are true only if the intention in question is expressed in the work. In conversation the main source of evidence for interpretive claims will be the words uttered in context. (So, if your real estate broker says, before the closing on the house that has just sold, "I will meet you at the bank," context tells you that he or she means the financial

institution, not the land bordering a river.) Similarly, the main source of evidence for interpretive claims about artworks will be features of the artwork understood in context. However, they are not the only source evidence. Just as we can ask an interlocutor what that person means by his or her words, or make inferences about their meaning from background information we have about that person, we can look for expressions of intention outside the artwork or use background information to help generate more plausible hypotheses about the artist's intention.

Actual intentionalism is often misrepresented. It is sometimes confused with the biographical criticism we have already rejected. It is also sometimes identified as the view that the correct interpretation of the work is the artist's interpretation of it. Further, the artist's interpretation is frequently not distinguished from his or her expressions of intention. This understanding is doubly confused. First, expressions of intention are not, in general, to be identified with interpretations of one's own behavior. "I'm planning on getting to the bank before it closes" is an expression of intention and not an interpretation. "I think I went to the bank just to get out of the house" is an interpretation of behavior and not an expression of intention, although there may be certain situations where these two things are hard to distinguish. Second, neither the artist's interpretation of the work nor his or her expressions of intention that are external to the work automatically constitute the correct interpretation of the work. The artist's interpretation of the work may be no better, and is often worse, than those of others. Expressions of intention can be inaccurate, insincere or, if issued before the work is completed, discarded rather than realized.

Criticisms of actual intentionalism

We have so far spoken of intentionalism without really defining it. To evaluate a view we need a more precise specification of what it says. So, for this purpose, let us define actual intentionalism as the view that the correct interpretation of an artwork identifies the intention of the artist expressed in the work.

Despite its plausibility, there are a number of serious criticisms of this view. One frequently expressed worry is whether we can ever know what the artist intends. The thought is that intentions are hidden and inaccessible. However, if they were inaccessible, we would be permanent mysteries to each other. In fact, we can often know another's intentions, semantic and otherwise. The same is true with regard to works of art. As with other cases, some intentions are transparent, some we can figure out even when not obvious, and about some, we can only form hypotheses that will never be confirmed or disconfirmed decisively.

Let us briefly return to "The Sick Rose" to see how this works in practice. Just as it is obvious that the poem is ostensibly about a rose, it is obvious that Blake intended this, and expressed this intention in the poem. Further, we can be sure that Blake intends the rose, the worm and the storm to be treated symbolically, to say something about the human condition. (Notice that obvious though this is, we have already broached, if barely, a matter of interpretation.) Finally, the symbolism intentionally concerns, at least in part, human love and sexuality and the destructiveness of certain sorts of relationship or nonrelationship having to do with sex and

love. We have very good reason to believe this both from the words of the poem (the reference to the rose's "bed of crimson joy" and the worm's "dark secret love") and the surrounding context (the other poems in the *Songs of Experience*, many of which betray similar concerns). What is more a matter of hypothesis is the specific destructive relationship (or nonrelationship) that Blake intended to symbolize in the poem, if he intended something specific at all.

A second criticism is that, even if we can sometimes know what an artist intends, it is a mistake to identify the meaning of a work with the intention of the artist. One of the best arguments for this point begins by noting that we sometimes fail to do what we intend to do. This includes our semantic intentions; we sometimes fail to say what we intend to say. In these cases it is plausible to suppose we have said something, but something other than what we intended to say, and, hence, it is plausible that there is a distinction between what we meant (what we intended to say) and the meaning of our utterance (what we said). Therefore, the two cannot be identified (Beardsley 1970; Levinson 1992; Tolhurst 1979).

A final objection concerns the proper aim of interpretation. Recall that we began by saying that when we interpret, we aim at (better) understanding and appreciating an artwork. The present objection claims that we aim at maximizing such appreciation by maximizing enjoyable aesthetic experience (Davies 2006). It is claimed that our interest in promoting enjoyment is best served by permitting a range of interpretations compatible with the artwork. The objection to actual intentionalism is that it unduly restricts the range of acceptable interpretations so that the proper aim of interpretation cannot be realized. Notice that this objection does not deny that intentionalism might be the right view in other interpretive contexts, but rather it claims that art and literature create a special context where different rules apply.

These last two objections raise three large issues within the theory of interpretation. One issue concerns whether there is a single proper aim of interpretation in the case of artworks, or whether there are many legitimate aims (the proper-aim issue). A related issue is whether this aim (or these aims) promotes an ideal of a plurality of acceptable interpretations of the same work, or an ideal of a single correct interpretation (the monism/pluralism issue). A final issue concerns whether there is such a thing as the meaning of a work (the "work-meaning" issue). We need to resolve these issues before we can fully evaluate the force of the objections to intentionalism.

The proper-aim issue

The last objection claimed that intentionalism is false because it misidentifies the proper aim of interpretation. How does one decide what we *should* be doing when we interpret a work of art? If there were a set of norms available a priori that we could appeal to, that would settle the matter, but anyone who appealed to such norms would likely be perceived as begging the question. What is available in a non-question-begging way is actual interpretive practice. However, a straightforward appeal to this is not decisive, because what people actually do is not necessarily what they should be doing. Nevertheless, if people engage in certain interpretive practices that make no straightforwardly false assumptions and that aim at valuable goals, then it is not

clear how we can object to such practices. The aims of such practices would then at least be among the permissible aims of art interpretation. If there is just one actual or possible aim that passed this test, it would be the one we should be pursuing when we interpret the relevant works, but if not, a number of different aims would be options.

Both common sense and actual practice tell us that there are a number of different interpretive aims that meet the above conditions. There is plenty of critical practice that pursues the goal of identifying the intentions that artists express in works. Furthermore, there is no reason to think that this goal is less valuable here than it is in other interpretive contexts, where it is widely admitted to be the goal of interpretation. Even if the meaning of a work is not invariably identified with the intention expressed in the work, as the second criticism of intentionalism claims, identifying expressed intention may still be a reasonable aim of interpretation. However, there is plenty of critical practice that doesn't pursue this goal, and aims at other things such as value maximization. It is hard to deny that maximizing value is a valuable goal. These two aims are not the only ones we find when we examine what critics do. Some interpretations aim to find *an* understanding of a difficult work without claiming that it is either the intended way of taking the work or the only way. Some seek out a meaning that the work could have (or have had) for a certain sort of audience. Others attempt to identify how the work would be understood against the backdrop of certain large ideas or theories such as those of Freud or Marx or those of some feminists. There may even be some interpretations that do not literally say anything about a work, but seek to get us to imaginatively contemplate certain actual or possible states of affairs.

One response to the above is to acknowledge that there may be many aims with which we interpret artworks, but that does not preclude the existence of a single *central* aim. To engage with artworks is to seek out an appreciative or valuable experience, it is claimed, and the central aim of interpretation is appreciation (Lamarque 2002) or the maximizing of valuable aesthetic experience (Davies 2006). There are two related problems with such a response. First, just as one can challenge whether there is such a thing as *the* aim of art interpretation, one can challenge the idea that among the several legitimate aims, exactly one is most central. But, second, if one is going to make this claim, it had better be clear what the aim is and how it differs from purported rivals. This is not the case with the aim of "appreciation," since it just seems to consist in finding characteristically literary properties of works. How is that different from seeking "understanding" or discovering "meaning," which is consistent with several of the aims described above? Something similar can be said about the value-maximizing project as Davies now conceives it. Value-maximizing interpretations are constrained by those aspects of what works do mean that are essential to their identity. So the value-maximizing project itself now involves more than one interpretive aim. One is to identify meanings a work could have that enhance the experience of the work, but a second is to identify aspects of what works do mean that are essential to the identity of the works. Further, why not endorse yet further aims such as the discovery of intended meaning, for that too might be value-enhancing (Goldman 1990). Pluralism of interpretive aim seems to be vindicated.

The monism/pluralism issue

The second issue was whether the aims of art interpretation promote an ideal of a plurality of acceptable interpretations or of a single correct interpretation. Those who believe that art interpretation aims at a single correct (true) comprehensive interpretation of a work are critical monists (Beardsley 1970; Hirsch 1967; Nehamas 1981). Those who believe that such interpretation aims at a noncombinable multiplicity of acceptable interpretations are critical pluralists (Goldman 1990; Thom 2000). It may seem as if what we have said so far has been in support of the pluralist rather than the monist. After all, if there are a wide range of interpretive aims, it will not make sense to combine them all together even if we could do so without outright inconsistency. The result would be a hodgepodge rather than a more comprehensive interpretation.

However, certain aims are properly pursued under the monist ideal while others are not. Actual intentionalist interpretation, for example, aims at finding the uniquely correct account of what the artist intended in the work. Even if the artist's intentions were ambivalent between different conceptions of the work, or if he or she intended the work to be ambiguous in various respects, a good intentionalist would seek to capture these things in a single interpretation. On the other hand, interpretations that aim at discovering what a work *could* mean, or at finding aesthetically valuable ways of taking a work, are best seen as pursuing the pluralist ideal. Though the interpretations can be consistently bundled together, it typically does not serve the aim of these interpretations to do so.

The work-meaning issue

This leaves us with the last of the three issues raised: among the numerous aims of interpretation, is there is a special one concerned with discovering the meaning of a work? The *meaning* of a work is to be distinguished from the various things that the work *could mean* or is merely taken to mean in the service of some interpretive aim. It is what the work actually *does* mean either in virtue of the artist's intention or on some other basis. Let us call this "work meaning" for short. Is there such a thing as work meaning?

There is currently no consensus on how to answer this question. The challenge is to show whether or not we can identify one of the aims of interpretation with the search for work meaning. Utterances provide a good model for seeing how we can make this identification. An utterance is the use of language on a particular occasion (in speech or writing) to say or do something. "There are ten sheep in the field" standardly states that there are ten sheep in the field, but on a particular occasion I may primarily be uttering this sentence to say or do something else. It may be my conventional way of telling you that two sheep, in our twelve-sheep herd, have wandered off (in which case I am primarily using these words to say or imply something beyond what the words literally say), or I may even be telling you to go look for the two missing sheep (in which case I am primarily using these words to do something: instruct you to look for the sheep). Notice we can distinguish between what my utterance could mean (what I could say or do in making it) and what it does mean (what I actually say or do). It is the latter that we would identify as *the meaning* of the utterance.

We can extend this model to works of art by thinking of them as utterances of the artists who create them. There are many things one could mean by uttering "O Rose, thou art sick!" By asking what Blake was doing (intentionally or not) we attempt to find out the (work) meaning of the line on the proposed model. The model applies most straightforwardly to literary works, which are, after all, literally complex utterances. However, whatever determines utterance (work) meaning may be applicable to other artworks as well.

Meaning and actual intentionalism

It is common ground between actual intentionalists and at least some of their opponents to think of works as utterances. Some of these intentionalists claim that the meaning of an utterance or work is to be identified with the intention expressed in it (Knapp and Michaels 1985). (Please notice, however, that this claim is not implied by the definition of intentionalism stated earlier. Intentionalism as it was originally defined made no claim about work meaning.) As we have seen, opponents of intentionalism have shown that we can make utterances (or create works) in which we say or do something other than what we intended, and so the identification between intention and utterance/work meaning does not always hold.

Conventions

If work meaning cannot be *identified* with intended meaning, what might it consist in? There are three main alternatives to consider. The first claims that the work meaning is determined by conventions, or a combination of conventions and context. A simple version of this view asserts that the meaning of a literary work is determined by linguistic conventions, literary conventions and other cultural conventions (Beardsley 1970). Proponents of this view can, and do, differ about which conventions are operative in fixing work meaning. For example, in the case of literary works, one can disagree about which linguistic conventions are appropriate since such conventions change over time. Are they the conventions in place when the work is written, when the interpretation is offered or at some other time? Among literary conventions, are conventions of interpretation relevant (if so, again which ones) or only conventions of writing or genre?

Though a conventionalist would need to answer these questions, they may be moot for us because there seems to be a decisive objection to simple conventionalism as a stand-alone account of work meaning. The meaning of an utterance is normally not fixed by conventions alone. Context (and, possibly, the utterer's intention) is always relevant. The content as well the truth value of utterances of "Richard is poor" will vary depending who is being referred to, the relevant sense of "poor" (which might indicate the wealth, health or another condition of Richard) and what the utterance is being used to do, such as describe Richard's condition or dismiss him as a potential investor. This is equally true of work meaning if it is to be understood on the model of utterance meaning. "The Sick Rose" cannot be fully understood outside the context of the poems that accompany it in the *Songs of Innocence and*

Experience, of its historical period and so on. An example of this is the choice of the rose as the sick flower. The rose had a conventional significance in Blake's poetic tradition as, for example, a symbol of fragile, transient beauty, but this hardly exhausts its significance in Blake's poetry, which can only be determined contextually.

This criticism does not apply to more recent versions of conventionalism, which explicitly recognize the role of context in fixing work meaning (Davies 2007; Nathan 2006). Consider irony. Irony cannot be detected merely by appealing to conventions. It is often analyzed in terms of speaker's intention. But proponents of sophisticated anti-intentionalist views propose instead that irony is grounded in contextual clues to be found either in the work itself or in the situation in which it is "uttered." Thus, it is claimed that what makes ironic the suggestion found in Swift's "A Modest Proposal" that fricasséeing Irish babies would have the double advantage of controlling and feeding the local population is "a confluence of linguistic clues found in the text of the essay as a whole and the connotation of words like 'fricassee'" (Nathan 2006: 285). However, this very example reveals a problem with the idea. For "A Modest Proposal" to work, we have to imagine that a fictional author is seriously proposing cooking Irish infants. So at one level – call it the level of representation – it makes sense to read the proposal as serious rather than ironic. How do we come to realize that the level of representation is not the ultimate level at which to understand the work? Contextual clues might be of some use here, but only once we understand what they are clues to. Clearly they are not clues to what is represented in the text or even the attitude of the fictional author. They are clues to Swift's communicative or literary intention in creating this work. It is that which is satirical rather than serious. Of course, it is not enough for Swift to have this intention for the work to be a satire and for the "Proposal" to be ironic. He must provide clues in the text so the intention can be grasped and in that way be successfully realized. But that is just what Swift does. Ultimately, even anti-intentionalists have to admit that we cannot avoid appealing to intentions in interpreting works, for without such an appeal we lack a reason to move beyond the level of representation. Their fallback position is that when we ask about the point of a representation we are not asking about an actual intention but a purely hypothetical one. This leads us to the second next major proposal about the nature of the meaning of a work.

Hypothetical intentionalism

The idea of the second account of work meaning is that it is properly identified not as what the actual artist actually intended, but with what an audience would understand to be intended, given certain background assumptions (Currie 2004; Levinson 1992; Tolhurst 1979). We can call this a *hypothetical* intention, and the view, hypothetical intentionalism. It recognizes that, because artworks are the deliberate creations of artists, audiences take the features of works as intended. The innovative aspect of this view is that work meaning is to be identified with a hypothetical intention an audience finds in the work.

The view still needs filling out. It has to tell us more about the audience in question and about the considerations it may use in identifying hypothetical intentions. Is it the audience contemporary with the artist, the audience that the artist intends to

address or an ideal audience? Are the considerations that the audience takes into account all items that are *evidence* of the artist's intention, or are other sorts of consideration also to be taken into account, such as whether the postulation of an intention makes the work artistically better? Are there restrictions on the kind of evidence to be brought forward? That all these questions have to be answered is not a criticism of hypothetical intentionalism, but it does indicate a challenge it must meet. There are different versions that answer these questions in different ways, and a hypothetical intentionalist needs to defend the particular version he or she endorses.

Partial intentionalism

The last account of work meaning says, roughly, that work meaning is a function of both the actual intentions of artists and other factors such as the conventions in place when the work is created. When the artist succeeds in expressing his or her intention in the work, that is what we should identify with the meaning of the work, but when actual intentions fail to be expressed, conventions in place when the work is created determine meaning (Carroll 2000; Livingston 2005; Stecker 2010). This view is sometimes called moderate or partial intentionalism.

Both hypothetical intentionalism and the partial intentionalism have problems, though not necessarily insurmountable ones. Perhaps the most serious objections to the former consist in the following purported counterexamples: First, it appears to be quite possible that work *W* means *P* (perhaps for conventional reasons), but *P* is not intended, and the relevant audience of *W* has good reason to believe *P* is not intended. *P* would then be an example of an unintended meaning that hypothetical intentionalism is unable to identify. Second, it may be the case that an artist intends to express *P* in *W* and the appropriate audience has good reason to believe this, but *P* fails to be expressed in *W* (because we can sometimes see what was intended even while seeing that it is not expressed). Here hypothetical intentionalism would assert that *W* means *P* when it does not (Stecker 2010). Still another objection to hypothetical intentionalism is that it really reduces to the value-maximizing view. That is, the hypotheses of the appropriate audience, while constrained by considerations derived by the identity of the work under interpretation, will be guided by the assumption that artworks are created to be appreciated as much as possible (Davies 2006). The most serious objections to the partial intentionlism are that, first, it relies on a notion of successful intention (an intention expressed in a work) – which is circular, because there is no way of explaining what success amounts to without an independent notion of work meaning (Levinson 2010); and second, it lacks a clear account of the way intention and convention jointly determine work meaning (Davies 2007). The existence of these objections, and of replies that there is not space here to explore, make the choice between these views not an obvious one.

However, it is also not clear that the choice is an altogether pressing one. This is because the two views have a tendency to reach the same conclusions about the meanings works have, because the intention an audience is most justified in finding in a work will very often be the intention the artist expressed in it. Some hypothetical intentionalists want to restrict the evidence audiences may use, and to allow them to employ other considerations such as the aesthetic merit an interpretation bestows on

a work (Levinson 1992). This seems to imply that the meanings they find in works will differ from those discovered by partial intentionalists. But proponents of the unified view may want to introduce the idea that successful intentions are those that can receive audience uptake, which could place similar restrictions on evidence, and they may defend a principle of charity in choosing among rival hypotheses, which could introduce considerations of aesthetic merit. Even if the views do not collapse into each other, they are close relatives.

See also Postmodernism (Chapter 17), Imagination and make-believe (Chapter 31), Fiction (Chapter 32), Narrative (Chapter 33), Metaphor (Chapter 34), Criticism (Chapter 36), Style (Chapter 43), Literature (Chapter 50).

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31
IMAGINATION AND MAKE-BELIEVE

Gregory Currie and Anna Ichino

Imagination and make-believe, along with fantasy, pretense and play, are regular components of theories of art and the aesthetic. Imagination is the central idea; the others generally appear as forms of imaginative activity or as its manifestations. The special importance of make-believe as a companion to imagination in recent aesthetic thinking reflects the influence of Kendall Walton's ideas, and we start with this. Towards the end we consider some empirical work which bears on the question of how imagination affects other mental states.

To believe and to make-believe

Walton (1990) argues that fictions (among which he includes all forms of pictorial representation) are to be understood as props in games of make-believe. Paradigmatic instances of such games are the informal and cooperative games of children, as where tree stumps serve as bears and the aim is to avoid capture by a bear. Here children acknowledge, at least implicitly, such rules as "where there is a stump it is make-believe or pretense that there is a bear, and so it is appropriate to imagine that there is a bear at that place"; this commits them also to the possibility of there being (in the game) a bear which no one has noticed. Thus the rules are normative and not merely regularities in behavior; it is possible for players to fail, willfully or through error, to live up to them. Rules may be discussed and agreed ad hoc by the players, but many rules have a naturalness which means that no one consciously represents them; we see only the players' conformity to a rule, and their sensitivity to its violation. The naturalness of a rule is sometimes a matter of there being a fit between some features of the prop and its role in the game; children do not usually need to stipulate that a suitably shaped piece of wood is, in the game, a sword. They may need, on the other hand, an explicit discussion about who counts as captain of the pirates.

The more structured and authoritative games provided by literary texts function against a similar background of rules which can be hard to state and which may vary according to genre. Having a copy of *Sense and Sensibility* will enable us to engage in a

game in which it is make-believe that we are learning, from this text, about Marianne and Elinor Dashwood and their problems. What rule does one conform to in playing this game? A simple rule would be "If the text of the novel says *P*, then imagine *P*." But in various situations this rule will not do. Is the narrator unreliable? If so we may sometimes be required to imagine the opposite of what is explicit in the text. But the difficulty in formulating a rule should not be taken to show that no rule is in play.

Central to this system and to other approaches which emphasize the connection between fiction and imagination (e.g. Currie 1990) is a contrast between imagination and belief. The journalist, historian or biographer presents a story that is a candidate for belief; the author of a fiction, however serious in other ways, does not present a story that we should assess for truth. Walton and others have suggested that we can define fiction in terms of imagining: fictions are representations which mandate imagining, and their contents (what is true in them) is what they mandate us to imagine. One problem here is that nonfictions, too, often invite imaginings, and perhaps require them in order to be fully appreciated (Friend 2008). But even if we cannot define fiction in terms of imagination alone, the simple thought that we imagine that Holmes lives in Baker Street, rather than believing it, remains plausible, and suggests that imagination is central to understanding acts of fictive communication between authors and readers.

Imagination is also important in our encounters with aesthetic and artistic objects that are not ordinarily classified as fictions. Walton argues that seeing something in a picture is a matter of imagining seeing that thing. Other accounts of the arts and of our responses to them make use of the notion of imagination (Scruton 1974; Wollheim 1974). Sometimes creativity is treated as a form of imagination. But while creativity and imagination are closely related, they are best kept distinct; there are uncreative imaginings – as with imagining falling when we peer over a cliff – and not all creative processes involve imaginative acts, as we see in the case of a scientist to whom the solution of a complex problem suddenly becomes evident (Gaut 2003).

Before moving on we note a recent suggestion by Gendler (2010: chs 13 and 14), according to whom a satisfactory account of our engagement with fictions requires a new kind of mental state: "alief," different from both belief and imagination and endowed with explanatory power concerning many aspects of our reactions and behaviors. As Gendler has it, alief is particularly suited to account for our emotional and cognitive responses to contents that we take to be merely fictional. (For critical commentary see Currie and Ichino 2012.)

Kinds of imagining

At the most general level we may think of the imagination as a capacity to recognize and respond to nonactual situations. This is related in complex ways to the capacity to use symbols and other substitutes for, or representations of, things; even very young children will spontaneously enrich their imaginative games by using a box as a make-believe version of a car. We frequently think of this capacity as enacted through mental images: visual ones, as well as those in other sensory modes. Thus the child may see the box and be prompted to form the image of a car. Also motor

imagery, or imagined movement of the body, plays a role here, as when the child imagines turning the steering wheel. Aristotle (1961) and many later philosophers thought of imagery as involved in all or most thinking. Recent philosophy has argued that much thinking is nonimagistic; the sentence has largely taken over as the presumed vehicle of thought. But if thought is not imagistic, there is still such a thing as imaginative thought, suggesting a type of imagining which stands to belief as imagery stands to the senses; we may believe that a famous detective lives in Baker Street, and we may imagine exactly this, without thereby forming any mental image. In such cases we specify the content of the imagining by saying "I imagine that *P*," where *P* is a proposition; this is propositional imagining. Imagery and propositional imagination now appear as two distinct imaginative modes: two ways of breaking with the here and now and translating ourselves to past, possible and sometimes impossible worlds.

Mental imagery in a given mode is similar in important ways to the corresponding mode of perception: having a visual image of something is recognized to be like seeing it. Is there a comparable resemblance between propositional imagining and belief? There are several similarities. A proposition can make the same contribution to our reasoning, whether it is believed or imagined: call this *inferential mirroring*. Inferential mirroring enables background knowledge to be recruited to inference from imagination in the same way it is from belief. If we come to believe that it is raining, we shall conclude that the road outside is wet: after all, we already believe that the road is exposed to the rain and that rain generally makes things wet. Suppose we are reading a fictional story according to which it is raining; the appropriate response is precisely to imagine that it is raining. And we draw the same conclusion as before: the road will be wet. The conclusion is now drawn within the scope of our imagining – we do not end up believing the road to be wet – yet such a conclusion depends on things we do believe about rain and roads. This means that authors of fictions do not have to tell us everything they want us to imagine; they rely on us using our general knowledge to reach our own conclusions. And psychological studies show that children engaged in make-believe do this from a remarkably young age, filling out their games by spontaneously importing aspects of the real world (Harris 2000).

Not that imagination and belief always deploy inferences from background knowledge in the same way. When we acquire a new belief, other new beliefs typically follow as a consequence of adding it to the set of our previous beliefs, though we do not – and could not – draw all the myriad consequences that the new belief along with preexisting ones might generate. The new belief may also change preexisting ones: if the new belief is inconsistent or in tension with something we previously believed, further belief revision will take place. We know little about that process, but interest, attention and motivation must play a role: if we learn that it is raining, the ways our beliefs get revised, and the inferring we do from the new belief and the now revised set of other beliefs, will vary depending on whether our current interest is in watering the garden, keeping water from coming through the roof or going for a picnic in the country. Given that our interest and attention vary according to whether we assess a proposition for truth or merely imagine it, we will not always draw the same conclusions irrespective of whether belief or imagination is in play.

This is especially true when we imagine a proposition as part of an engagement with a fictional story. Fictions have the effect, often intended, of shifting our attention, and they implicitly discourage certain lines of enquiry. There are things that would be astonishing in real life and hence the subject of intensive enquiry: the extraordinary poetic imagination of Othello, the placement of the diners on just one side of the table in Leonardo's *Last Supper* (Walton 1990: ch. 4). Within fiction, these things have explanations in terms of style, genre or the limitations of a medium, and are simply taken as given.

These are reasons why imagining and believing are not wholly alike in inferential role. But their similarities are striking. That there are divergences in particular cases is interesting and may tell us something about how different genres of fiction work; it does not challenge the idea that propositional imagination is a state designed by nature to mimic aspects of belief. This raises a question: if imagination can be belief-like in the ways we have described, might we need a kind of imagining that is like desire? Might we, in watching *Othello*, "imaginatively desire" that Desdemona not be murdered, without really desiring this – just as we imagine her being a Venetian girl, without really believing that she is? Some have argued that there is only the *genuine* desire that, *in Shakespeare's fiction*, Desdemona not be murdered (Nichols and Stich 2003). On this view, there is *make-believe*, but no such thing as *make-desire*. One problem with this proposal is that it obscures the distinction between our attitudes towards fictional characters, like Desdemona, and our attitudes towards fictional works, like *Othello*. We should allow that one may desire for Desdemona to be saved, while being happy that *Othello* is a play in which she is murdered (Doggett and Egan 2007; Currie 2010b).

There is a further similarity between propositional imagination and belief in that imagining something pleasing, frightening or disgusting can have the same or similar emotional effects as believing it. Various aspects of our emotional engagement with fictions will be discussed in the next sections.

Fiction, imagination and emotion

Many of our acts of imagining in response to fiction are empathic; we imagine "from the inside" what some character thinks or wants. But empathizing with people – either real people or characters such as Anna Karenina – involves more than simply reproducing, in imagination, their beliefs and desires; so it involves more than merely propositional imagining. For one thing, empathic contact with people generally involves an aspect of feeling. This may be through the sharing of emotion: empathy with a sad person involves a sharing in the feeling of sadness, as well as in the thoughts that identify the object of that sadness. We might, to take some fictional characters, share the turmoil of Fabrizio at Waterloo, or of Anna Karenina at the railway station. When we do that, we typically also mimic some of the characters' perceptual states and bodily sensations. In that case, we do not literally see what they see; instead we visualize the scenes from their perspectives. Similarly we may have auditory images of what the characters hear, or motor images as of moving our body in the way they move. Visual and auditory imagery play little role in theater and

film, because these are media that give us direct access to the relevant sights and sounds. This is not merely a matter of visual and auditory imagery being redundant; vision and visual imagery tend to exclude one another, as do hearing and auditory imagery. Tactile and motor imagery, however, are not yet replaced by virtual reality systems that provide convincing tactile and motor experiences; and written literature encourages imagery in all modalities.

The importance of these nonpropositional imaginings for our experience of fiction is often obscured by the fact that propositional imagining fits neatly with the idea of fictional truth. When we say what is true in a story (fictional or otherwise), we specify propositions; what is sometimes called the world of the story is just the set of propositions that are true according to that story. It is natural, then, to describe an appropriate engagement with fictional stories as one where the subject imagines just those propositions. But propositional imaginings on their own do not fully explain the hold that fictions have on us; this has much to do with our affective, sensory and bodily involvement with fictions. Nor are sensory and bodily imaginings merely vivid accompaniments to propositional imaginings; they can provide contents for propositional imaginings. It is said that propositional imagining is limited in the possibilities it opens up for imagining about specific ways of doing things, because we quickly run out of resources with which to conceptualize these specific ways. How can we imagine, propositionally, Albert's way of dancing the tango, for example? This seems to be beyond the reach of propositional imagining. But we should question the assumption that propositional imagining requires us to formulate a fully descriptive thought. We say such things as: "Albert dances this way," while dancing in the way that Albert does: here "this way" refers the audience to a sample of Albert-style dancing (Heal 1997; Walton 1999). Likewise, we can imagine that Albert dances that way, while inwardly representing something which nondescriptively identifies (more or less) that way of dancing: a repertoire, say, of imagined bodily movements. What we have just said about imagined actions holds also for imagined perceptual experiences: we can imagine that Sherlock Holmes looks like *that*, where the reference of "that" is determined by our visual image of Holmes; similarly for the case of imagining that the guns at Waterloo sound like *that*, or that Dracula's cool, dry handshake feels like *that*.

All this makes it natural to think that sensory and bodily imaginings combine with propositional imaginings in the creation of richly empathic experiences. We use all these forms of imagination to mimic a character's experiences "from the inside," and one measure of excellence in fiction-making is its capacity to enable these imaginings. But note that empathic explorations may be important for fiction without our imaginative engagement with fiction being always or even usually of this kind. A good deal of the time we are simply imagining that this or that happens, and our responses to a character's situation will often be at odds with her own; we are made tense by the thought that the character is in danger from an enemy she is oblivious of. Richard Wollheim (1984: 68) speaks of an empathic audience as one which

> from the outset selects one character out of the *dramatis personae*, responds to the mental states of this character by duplicating them, and then goes on to respond to the mental states of all the other characters – and for that

matter to the narrative itself as it unfolds – in the perspective of this one character.

Such an audience would be unusually steadfast in its perspective. We suggest that it is more common for audiences to shift perspective between the characters according to the needs of the dramatic moment, as well as to occupy, a good deal of the time, a perspective that no character occupies.

We have said that our psychological engagement with fictional artworks is made possible first of all by the fact that we imagine (propositionally, as well as in other ways) the stories that they represent, becoming emotionally caught up in their plots and deeply moved by the fate of their characters. The idea of emotions directed towards fictional events and characters raises conceptual problems somewhat similar to those we discussed earlier in connection with desire. Can we really pity or fear for Anna Karenina when we know that there is no such person (Radford 1975)? According to Walton, we can't: what is involved in such cases is not emotion, but quasi-emotion – something qualitatively like emotion, but differing from it in not requiring a belief in its object. We say, of course, that we pity Anna, without any qualification, but we also do not qualify when we say that Anna threw herself under the train. Walton suggests that such unqualified remarks are to be understood as expressive of our participation in games of make-believe with fictional artworks; reading Tolstoy's story produces in us some physiological-psychological change (quasi-pity), which in turn generates the make-believe truth that we pity Anna (Walton 1990: pt II). Others have objected that our responses to fiction are not mere make-believe, but rather genuine emotions like those we have towards real entities. Moran, for instance, emphasizes the heterogeneity of the emotions, contrasting one's horror at the recollection of a disastrous first date about which one can do nothing with one's discomfort about a future contingency where one has plenty of room to affect the outcome; given the breadth of cases we are happy to count as "genuinely emotional" it is, he suggests, unpersuasive to argue that cases where the object is something fictional should thereby be denied the status of genuine emotions (Moran 1994; see also Lamarque 1981, Currie and Ravenscroft 2002: ch. 9). The view that genuine emotions can themselves be supported by imaginings rather than by beliefs is corroborated also by empirical findings (Harris 2000: ch. 4), as well as by arguments to the effect that emotional responses to merely imagined circumstances are highly adaptive (Damasio 1994: ch. 8). Recognizing the emotional power of imagination may help to explain some interesting phenomena that characterize our imaginative engagement with fictions – as we shall see.

The power and limits of imagining

A peculiar phenomenon which has been widely discussed in the last two decades goes by the label "imaginative resistance." This phenomenon – pointed out by Hume (1985), and revived by Walton (1994) and Moran (1994) – consists in the fact that we are oddly resistant to certain kinds of imaginings, cases of "fictional morality" being among the most obvious examples. Fictions often construct wildly counterfactual scenarios

with talking animals, ghosts and other elements of pure fantasy and science fiction. While these genres do not have universal appeal, we experience no special barriers to imagining such contents. Yet a fiction that asks us to imagine (not, note, to believe) that slavery and female infanticide are good is likely to create substantial problems for an audience committed to the immorality of these things.

Recent discussion of this issue has revealed some complexity in the causes and modes of imaginative resistance, a rich variety of cases outside the moral realm, and the need to clearly distinguish resistance to engaging in a certain imagining from resistance to accepting something as true in a story (Gendler 2006; Walton 2006; Weatherson 2004; Yablo 2002). Resistance is often not so much to imagining a given proposition, but rather to imagining its integration within a broader framework of fictional truths: the difficulty might be not in imagining, say, the morally deviant proposition that "female infants should die," but in integrating that proposition into a fiction where the world of the story does not differ naturalistically from the real world. How, we wonder, could it be true that *in such circumstances* female infants should die (Weatherson 2004)? It is also worth noticing that the very term "resistance" may be misleading, as it suggests that the problem is always one of unwillingness. Sometimes this is indeed the case: though well able to imagine that a certain ethnic group is morally inferior, we nonetheless *won't* engage with the plot of a propaganda movie which develops this theme. But in other cases the difficulty seems to be due to the fact that, even willing, we *can't* imagine a certain scenario, as with a story telling us that an empty box contains a statue (Priest 1997).

Both these "Can't" and "Won't" explanations of the phenomenon of imaginative resistance require some further elaboration. Can't explanations face the problem of specifying the circumstances under which one cannot imagine something. Mere logical or conceptual impossibility, for example, may not be sufficient; Frege and others seem to have believed a contradiction prior to its exposure by Russell, and what can be believed can surely be imagined. Won't explanations, on the other hand, need a convincing story about why we don't want to imagine certain things. There may be several different reasons for that. One is that we may fear that to imagine things we deem immoral brings us dangerously close to actually believing them (Gendler 2000, 2006). Another reason is that a story which asks us to imagine that female infanticide is good is likely to invite emotional responses such as regret at the failure to kill this female infant, or pleasure at having succeeded, which we find objectionable simply because feeling certain ways about imaginary scenarios places us closer than we wish to those who feel that way about comparable real ones (Currie 2010a: ch. 6).

Can't and Won't accounts draw our attention to radically different features of imagination. Can't accounts bring out the limits of imagination: they suggest that imagination is not the unbridled faculty we often take it to be, but is constrained by our (evaluative, and perhaps also other) beliefs. Won't accounts look in the opposite direction, focusing attention on the power that imagination has (or that we think it has) on our real attitudes, such as emotions and beliefs. These two kinds of account are not necessarily rivals, though: as we have seen, it is plausible to think that each explains certain cases of imaginative resistance.

How realistic is the worry that what we imagine may distort our beliefs? Some recent work in psychology is relevant to this question (see Gendler and Liao 2010

for a survey). We are familiar with the experience of being engrossed in a story, so much so that the real world seems to temporarily disappear. Gerrig (1993) called this "transportation," using the metaphor of a physical journey: a reader (or movie watcher) is taken some distance from her world of origin; some aspects of that world become temporarily inaccessible; she returns somewhat changed by the journey. Such an experience is made possible by the fact that, for a while, our attention, imagination and memory are focused on the story and away from the world. Transportation is of course a matter of degree, and shades off into mere low-level engagement. A scale has been constructed to measure the degrees of transportation in terms of the extent to which readers' cognitive and emotional faculties are absorbed by the stories (Green and Brock 2000).

Various studies (e.g. Dal Cin *et al*. 2004) claim that transported readers are likely to change their attitudes in ways that reflect the views expressed, explicitly or implicitly, by the stories they read. Such reported attitudinal changes are striking in that they do not seem to be significantly dependent on whether the stories are presented as fiction or as nonfiction. Transportation into a story where a young girl is brutally stabbed to death by an unrestrained psychiatric patient is said to influence readers' judgments about real levels of violence, unhappiness and injustice in the world, even when the story is explicitly labeled as fiction (Green and Brock 2000). Transportation theorists call such effects *narrative persuasion*, and describe them straightforwardly in terms of belief: the more readers are transported, it is said, the more they are thereby likely to embrace *story-consistent beliefs*.

Two points are worth mentioning here which complicate this picture. First, reference to "story-consistent beliefs" does not help much in explaining why a reader would pick up one belief rather than another from a story. A story which describes a murder by a psychiatric patient may be (and seems to have been in the case of the experiment cited above) perfectly consistent with the belief that such an event is highly unusual and the world is on balance morally benign; why, then, would most readers of such a story end up asserting that the world is hostile, and how would this be especially indicative of their being influenced by the story itself? Understanding why certain general propositions, unstated in the story, are nonetheless significantly connected with it may require us to understand how readers make inferences about the author's communicative purposes. We might for example suppose that readers naturally assume that fictional stories serve as parables, hence they easily, perhaps too easily, absorb the lesson they take the parable to be offering. It should also be noted – and here is our second point – that the evidence available so far does not fully support the conclusion that the experience of transportation actually changes readers' *beliefs*. That evidence consists of self-reports of agreement/disagreement expressed by readers immediately after having undergone their transportation experiences. But people's introspective reports of their own views are not always accurate. Some philosophers reject altogether the idea that we have introspective access to our own beliefs and deliberations, insisting that we understand them by interpreting our behavior in much the same way we come to know of other people's beliefs and deliberations (Carruthers 2010). And even granting some form of introspective access, few would now argue that mistakes about our own beliefs are impossible, or even very rare. In the cases we are considering, subjects may be misled by the

strong emotions typical of experiences of transportation, and their avowals concerning justice or violence may be expressions of states and attitudes other than beliefs, such as pessimistic moods. There is also currently little evidence that these tendencies to avow changed attitudes survive beyond the period immediately after reading (Green and Carpenter 2011).

That said, there are celebrated if unusual cases of fictions which seem to have led to dramatic shifts of opinion, as with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Just how common fiction-induced changes in belief are, and how they are produced, remains an open question. But if the evidence on which transportation theorists have relied so far suggests caution concerning claims of belief change, the impact of transportation upon our emotions and moods seems beyond doubt: intense responses to fictional characters and events are a key factor in all transportation experiences. Earlier we suggested that one reason we are sometimes unwilling imaginers is that we fear that imaginings turn into belief. Perhaps that is in part because we tend to confuse our emotional changes with changes in belief; in that case our fear may be exaggerated. But rightly or wrongly, we credit imagination with enormous power.

See also Interpretation (Chapter 30), Fiction (Chapter 32), Art, expression and emotion (Chapter 39), Literature (Chapter 50).

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32
FICTION

David Davies

Few concepts are as central to our ordinary commerce with artworks yet as philosophically problematic as that of fiction. While we seem to have little difficulty employing the concept in everyday life, a number of very thorny problems continue to preoccupy philosophers. Most obviously, the very nature of fiction calls for clarification. What distinguishes those verbally or visually presented representations that are fictions from those that are not? Second, there are questions about the notion of "fictional truth," or, less paradoxically, "truth in a fiction." Third, there are possibly deeper questions about what may be termed "truth *through* fiction," the capacity of fictions to furnish us with knowledge of the actual world. Fourth there are questions about the mode of existence enjoyed by those characters and events, described in fictional narratives, upon which the truth or falsity of claims made about those narratives seems to depend. Finally, there are apparent paradoxes arising out of our emotional responses to representations acknowledged to be fictional. I shall examine in some detail how the first three questions might be answered, and briefly locate the remaining questions in the broader philosophical terrain.

What is fiction?

However unified or patchwork a "theory of fiction" may turn out to be, its core must be an account of what it is for something to *be* a fiction. While some (e.g. Walton 1990) have taken a broader view, we may focus upon fictionality as a property of certain *narratives* presented either in verbal form or in a nonliterary medium such as cinema, theater, painting or dance. In focusing on the fictionality of narratives, we bracket two other significant questions, of which more below: first, what makes something containing a fictional narrative a *work* of fiction, and second, what sense can we make of *nonnarrative* fictions?

Paradigm fictional narratives (*Treasure Island*, *2001*) differ from paradigm nonfictional narratives (*The Voyage of the Beagle*, a cinematic history of space exploration) in both the manner in which the narrated events are presented, and the extent to which the narrative portrays actual happenings and actual agents. But such differences cannot be constitutive of the fictionality of fictions. As to the manner of narration, there are uncontroversially fictional works that utilize narrative structures characteristic of

nonfiction (for example, the diary, the letter and the "academic" style adopted by Borges in many of his short stories), and nonfictional works that utilize narrative structures characteristic of fiction (uncontroversially, some historical narratives, and, more controversially, works of "literary journalism" such as Capote's *In Cold Blood*).

As for the portrayal of actual happenings and actual agents, most fictional narratives contain at least some narrative elements that, if taken as assertions, refer to and make true claims about real existents. For example, true sentences about coach routes in Victorian England can be found in *Bleak House*. On the other hand, some nonfictional works – such as discredited histories – make false claims about actual events and contain expressions that do not refer to any real person, place or entity. Nor can we take the proportion of true to false claims to be the distinguishing feature of fiction, for this will not allow for the possibility of largely or wholly true (but *accidentally* true) fictional narratives.

This suggests that the fictionality of a narrative may be a matter of *how it functions*, or *how it was designed to function*. In the former case, what matters is the function conferred upon a narrative by its users. For example, it has been suggested that a narrative is fictional when its socially recognized function is to serve as a certain kind of resource in games of make-believe (Walton 1990). Just as children employ "props" in their imaginative play, so readers may use a text as the basis for an exercise of the imagination. Where this use is socially sanctioned for texts of a given kind, those texts are fictions. Fictionality so conceived is independent of the intentions of a narrator. It is a matter of the accepted ways of using a thing, rather than the uses for which it was designed.

Such an account of fiction, however, has difficulty preserving the intuitive distinction between a narrative's *being* fictional, and its being *treated as* or *believed to be* fictional – the distinction we need to make sense of the idea that a narrative from another cultural tradition that we treat as nonfiction might really be fiction, or vice versa. This distinction is preserved if we take fictionality to be a matter of the function the maker of a narrative *intends* it to perform. According to some philosophers, language (verbal and nonverbal) is typically used in the performance of actions, called "speech acts." The paradigm speech act is that of asserting that something is the case. On one account of fictionality (Searle 1975), fiction is the product of an agent's *pretending* to assert the sentences that make up a narrative. One problem for this view is that there seem to be pretended assertions that do not result in fictions: for example, acts of mimicry (Currie 1990: 17). A further problem is that, in laying out the setting for certain imagined events, authors often seem to be asserting various things, but it is unclear whether an utterer can both assert and also pretend to assert one and the same thing in a given utterance.

On an alternative account (e.g. Wolterstorff 1980: 219–34; Currie 1990: ch. 1; Lamarque 1996: ch. 2; Davies 2007: ch. 3), fiction arises when an agent performs a genuine speech act differing from assertion in one significant respect. Whereas it is a condition for assertion that a speaker intends that her audience *believes* what she states, in what Currie terms "fictive utterance" an author intends that her audience "makes-believe" what is narrated. Others (e.g. Pettersson 1993; Carroll 1995; Gibson 2007: 170ff.) have drawn this distinction in terms of an invitation to *entertain* rather than believe what is narrated, although the significance of the distinction between

"entertaining" and "making believe" is open to debate. Fiction, so conceived, requires what Lamarque terms a "practice of fiction making": there must be publicly recognized conventions that allow for the suspension of certain standard commitments involved in assertion, so that an author can invoke these conventions, and an audience, recognizing this, can respond appropriately by making believe or entertaining, rather than believing, the narrated propositions.

If the fictional status of a narrative requires that it originate in an act of pretended assertion or fictive utterance, this is not usually taken to be sufficient for fictionality. Some theorists have held that, if a receiver is asked to imagine a narrative that corresponds in every detail to actual events, fictionality requires that this correspondence be accidental (Currie 1990: 42ff.; Lamarque 1996: 25), not a result of the author's belief that the narrative is true. In this sense, a fictional narrative must be "made up," although (contra Deutsch 2000) being "made up" is not itself sufficient for fictionality since lies are made up but are not fictions. An alternative but related proposal (Davies 2007: ch. 3) is that, while an author *may* include things she knows or believes to be true in a fictional narrative, her overriding motivation in doing so must be some storytelling objective other than narrating what she believes to have happened. This approach locates the fictionality of a narrative that is the product of an act of fictive utterance in the constraints under which narrative construction takes place. The author of a nonfictional narrative, it is claimed, is constrained by what may be termed the "fidelity constraint": include only events you believe to have occurred, narrated as occurring in the order in which you believe them to have occurred. The author of a fictional narrative, on the other hand, is not governed by this constraint, but by some more general purpose in storytelling, such as *entertaining the reader* or *illuminating some more general feature of the world*, as in scientific or philosophical thought experiments. This is not, of course, to deny that *some* beliefs about the actual world constrain the construction of fictional narratives: Dickens's beliefs about Victorian London, for example, constrained his construction of the narrative of *Bleak House* because he wished to compose a fictional story *set in that location*.

It is crucial to distinguish, as both proponents and critics of fictive-utterance theories often fail to do, between the fictionality of a narrative and the fictionality of a *work*. Fictive-utterance theories cannot tell us what makes a *work* fictional, because

(1) fictional works often contain extended passages that are most plausibly taken as the result of assertions, not fictive utterances – for example, disquisitions on whaling techniques in *Moby Dick* (Gibson 2007: ch. 5), and
(2) nonfictional works often contain extended passages that satisfy the fictive utterance theorist's requirements for fictionality – for example, some classical histories and philosophical and scientific works containing thought experiments (Friend 2008).

Suppose that it is a *necessary* condition for the fictionality of a work that it contain a fictional narrative. What, then, distinguishes fictional works from works of nonfiction that comprise fictional narratives? Stacie Friend (2008) suggests that what matters is the embedding of works in those practices associated with particular genres. The genre-defining practices that we associate with works of fiction are those that foster

the use of creative imagination on the part of authors and make-believe on the part of audiences. But it seems that our sorting of works, or genres, as fictional and nonfictional reflects not only this but also a number of other different and potentially conflicting considerations. For example, the inclusion of fictional narratives in nonfictional works seems to subserve a more general interest in truth, as with philosophical works containing thought experiments. But this also holds for many uncontroversial works of fiction, such as Graham Greene's *The Third Man*, where a fictional narrative serves as an extended thought experiment articulating a purported general truth about the world. Characteristic features of fictional works are the presence of great narrative detail and the strategic subordination of nonfictional elements to fictional elements within the work, but it is not clear that necessary and sufficient conditions for the fictionality of works will be forthcoming in these or any other terms.

A convincing account of what makes a *narrative* fictional is not a negligible accomplishment, however. John Gibson suggests (2007: 163) that the only alternative to a fictive utterance theory of fictional works is a fictive utterance theory of fictional sentences, as things whose contents we are prescribed to imagine. The latter, he claims, cannot illuminate the philosophically interesting questions about fictions. But this would follow only if fictional narratives are merely, as we might put it, fictional sentences writ large. It might be argued, however, that if authors of fictional narratives prescribe a particular receptive attitude to receivers, this attitude is a complex mixture of imagining and accepting or believing: we are prescribed to imagine a fictive content *of* a real setting, but not to imagine the real setting itself. It is not prescribed that readers of the Sherlock Holmes stories imagine that there is a city called London with a certain geography, for example, but that they imagine *of* this real setting that certain fictional characters inhabit it and certain fictional events take place in it.

It is not only narratives, and works comprising narratives, that are classified as fictions. We speak of fictional descriptions – for example, a description of an imaginary garden – and of fictional pictures. But fictionality in such cases seems to be derivative upon the central case of narratives, and open to a parallel analysis. Fictional pictures, for example, seem to be either pictures of things that feature in fictional narratives (for example, Tenniel's drawings of Lewis Carroll's Alice, or paintings of scenes in Greek mythology), or pictures used as, or intended for use as, stimuli for exercises of the imagination (e.g. pictures of imaginary landscapes). It is also more difficult to find analogues of the distinction between fictional narratives and fictional works in the case of nonnarrative fictions – perhaps a photograph of a painting of an imaginary landscape would be an example.

Truth in a fiction

It is generally agreed that it is true in the Sherlock Holmes stories that the famous detective resides at 221B Baker Street. But in virtue of what is this, or indeed anything else, true in a particular story or fiction, or "fictionally true"? The simplest answer would be: it is fictionally true in a story N that p if and only if it is explicitly stated in the text T, in which N is narrated, that p, where it is "explicitly stated" in a

text that *p* if and only if the text contains, as a proper part, an expression of *p*. (The rider "as a proper part" is necessary if the content of expressions occurring in direct or indirect quotation in a text is to be excluded from what is "explicitly stated.") Being explicitly stated in the text of *N* is neither necessary nor sufficient for being true in *N*, however. It is not necessary because we must allow at least some things to be true in a story though they are neither explicitly stated nor immediately derivable from what is explicitly stated – for example, characters in adventure stories presumably eat and sleep in between their explicitly described exploits. It is not sufficient, on the other hand, because we must allow for the "internal narrators" of stories to be deceivers or deceived (as in Nabokov's *Pale Fire*), or disposed to understate, exaggerate or employ irony.

The second of these problems is easier to resolve, for we encounter, and generally surmount, analogous difficulties in understanding nonfictional narratives. If we believe the author of such a narrative to be informed about the subject, truthful, reliable and speaking literally in a language we understand, then we generally infer the truth of whatever is explicitly stated. When we distrust the utterer, or believe the utterer to be ignorant of the subject, or to be speaking nonliterally, we make appropriate adjustments in the inferences we draw from what is explicitly stated. In our attempts to determine what is true in a fictional story, we can employ much the same strategies, as long we are able to gauge, from the fictional text, when the narrator is trustworthy, or deceived, or speaking nonliterally. Similarly, we can bring to our reading of fictions the same interpretive skills that enable us to determine when a speaker, in saying one thing, intends to communicate something else. Philosophers talk here of our capacity to grasp "conversational implicatures" (Grice 1975).

No such easy solution presents itself when we consider those fictional truths that are neither "explicitly true" – true in virtue of what is explicitly stated – nor conversationally implicated by a text. We infer most of what is nonexplicitly true in a story on the basis of what we take to be "given," in the understanding of a story, as unstated background. For example, as noted above, unless informed to the contrary we assume that characters in novels are individuals possessed of the features and capacities characteristic of human agents, and we infer other nonexplicit fictional truths on the basis of such assumptions. However, in reading fictions we cannot utilize the same strategy that furnishes us with a background for our understanding of nonfictional narratives. In interpreting the latter, we take as unstated background whatever is independently known to be true of the actual world. In the case of standard fictional narratives, however, many things that are explicitly true in or implicated by the story are not true in the actual world. If we were to take everything independently known to be true of the actual world as unspoken background in our reading of a fictional story, we would usually render the narrative inconsistent, and even incoherent. Indeed, whole genres of fiction ("superhero" comics, fantasy, fairy stories, "magic realist" fiction) are predicated on the assumption – known to the competent reader – that the world of the story differs fundamentally from the actual world.

Thus a theory of truth in fiction faces a distinctive problem in specifying how we determine, for a given fiction, the unspoken background that is nonexplicitly true in the story, and that governs legitimate inferences from what is explicitly true or implicated. One approach here utilizes what philosophers term "possible worlds":

roughly speaking, alternative ways that the actual world might have been. The suggestion is that what is true in a story *N* can be captured by appeal to possible worlds in which those things that are explicitly true or implicated in the text of *N* are *actually true*. We may term these the *S*-worlds for that story (Lewis 1983). By definition, the *S*-worlds for *N* agree concerning everything that is explicitly true or implicated in the text of *N*. However, they differ dramatically from one another in other respects. In the different *S*-worlds for *Bleak House*, for example, every feature of the actual world not explicitly mentioned or implicated in the text of the novel can vary in countless ways.

The strategy is to identify the "unspoken background" for *N* with what is common, over and above those truths that all *S*-worlds share, to some subset of the total set of *S*-worlds for *N*. This requires some principle that will pick out the relevant subset. For example, we might select those *S*-worlds that most closely resemble the actual world, or those *S*-worlds that most closely resemble the way we believe the actual world to be. The proposal, then, would be that what is true in *N* is what is true in every *S*-world of the specified type. But these proposals lead to counterintuitive results when we consider fictions generated in cultures whose beliefs about the world differ sharply from our own. Additionally, to tie what is true in a story to *our* beliefs about the world entails that what is true in that story changes over time as our beliefs change. To meet these objections, we might select those *S*-worlds that most closely resemble the way the author of the narrative believes the actual world to be. Being true in each such *S*-world for *N*, however, is neither necessary nor sufficient for being true in *N*. It is not sufficient because an author may have strange and idiosyncratic beliefs that are completely orthogonal to what is explicitly true in the story. And it is not necessary because we want to allow for nonexplicit truths in a story that contradict the author's actual beliefs: for example, nonexplicit truths about the fire-breathing capacities of dragons in a fairy story.

Lewis proposes that what is true in *N* is what is true in those *S*-worlds for *N* that most closely resemble the way members of the intended audience for *N* believe the actual world to be. But any account of fictional truth based on the notion of truth in a set of possible worlds has difficulties with stories in which inconsistent truths obtain – for example, certain sorts of time-travel stories – because possible worlds must be *consistent* in order to be possible. To resolve this problem, Currie (1990: ch. 2) proposes an analysis of truth in a story not in terms of possible worlds in which a given set of beliefs is true, but rather in terms of belief sets themselves. He maintains that, in reading fictional narratives, readers imagine, as part of their make-believe, that they are being informed about the events in the story by a reliable source, the so-called "fictional author" of the story. The fictional author is *not* to be identified with the actual author, who, for Currie, performs an act of fictive utterance. Nor can the fictional author be identified with the narrator internal to the story, since the latter, as already noted, may be deceived or deceiving. The fictional author, by contrast, is assumed to be both completely trustworthy and completely knowledgeable about the narrated events. The reader determines what is true in the story through forming an impression of the character and beliefs of the fictional author, an impression based on the text of the narrative and assumptions about its provenance. By definition, what is true in the story corresponds to the beliefs rightly attributable to the fictional author.

A ruling assumption in the literature just surveyed is that a philosophical analysis of truth in a story, of "story meaning," is *basic* to an account of fiction, both in the sense that it is presupposed by any attempt to understand the "meaning" of a fictional work in any deeper sense ("thematic meaning"), and in the sense that the problem of story meaning is independently tractable. It may be argued, however, that our engagement with story meaning must often proceed in tandem with our attempt to grasp more thematic meanings intended by the *real* author (Lamarque 1996: ch. 4; Davies 1996). For example, the reader's decision that the Curriean "fictional author" of Marquez's *100 Years of Solitude* believes that the magical events narrated in the story really occurred (rather than believing them to be the imaginings of a deceived narrator) rests upon an assessment of what Marquez himself was attempting to do in telling the story. Indeed, it may be a feature distinguishing those narratives we treat as "serious fiction" – as works of literature in the evaluative sense – that a reader who has not inquired as to the point of *this* story being told in *this* way can be held to have failed to exercise a properly responsible attitude towards the work. These considerations have suggested to some (Byrne 1993; Livingston 2005: ch. 7) that fictional truth is to be elucidated in terms of the storytelling intentions that the actual author succeeds in realizing in the story, or the storytelling intentions that suitably informed (or "ideal") readers would ascribe to the actual author. The more general lesson, however, is that determining what a Curriean fictional author believes, or what the real author successfully invites the reader to make-believe, may require determining what the real author wants us to *believe*, that is, the thematic point of telling us *this* story. If this is the case for much serious fiction, then issues of "truth *in* fiction" and "truth *through* fiction" – the subject of the next section – are not as distinct as some would have us think.

Truth through fiction

How is "truth through fiction" possible? How can we learn about the real world by reading narratives whose construction is not guided by the fidelity constraint? There are at least four ways in which fiction might be represented as a source of knowledge or understanding of the real world (for a related and more detailed analysis, see Novitz 1987: ch. 6). First, it might serve as a source of factual information. If authors incorporate true statements about the real world into their narratives – in providing a setting for the events the reader is invited to make-believe or entertain, for example – then readers may come to believe those statements as a result of reading the narratives. Second, fictions might furnish the reader with an understanding of more general principles – moral, metaphysical or psychological, for example – taken to be operative in the real world, principles explicitly or implicitly exemplified and made salient by the narrated events. This is one way of understanding Aristotle's claim (1941) that poetry is more philosophical than history. Third, in presenting the fictional world, the narrative might employ novel categories or kinds, natural or psychological, whose application to the real world illuminates certain matters of fact (Goodman 1976: 258ff.). Finally, fiction might be a source of affective knowledge, knowledge of what it would be like to be in a particular kind of circumstance. Some writers have

argued that this plays a valuable part in the development of our moral sensibility (Putnam 1978; Nussbaum 1990).

The claim that fictions can furnish us with knowledge of the real world is, however, open to a number of objections (see Stolnitz 1992; for a critical discussion, see Carroll 2002). For example, even if we indeed form beliefs of the sorts described and some of these beliefs are true, to what extent can the acquisition of beliefs in this way satisfy our requirements for genuine learning or knowledge? Knowledge, after all, has traditionally been taken to require beliefs that are not only true but also justified. Perhaps the most we can get from reading fiction are *hypotheses* about the general ordering of things in the world, or *beliefs* about specific aspects of the world, or *potentially insightful* ways of categorizing things in our experience. Talk of "learning" from fiction, it might be said, is justified only to the extent that the fruits of our reading are subject to further independent verification.

Some proponents of "literary cognitivism" seem to grant this objection, talking of the need to "project" what we find in fiction onto the world to test its cognitive credentials (e.g. Novitz 1987: ch. 6). Other literary cognitivists (e.g. Carroll 2002; Elgin 2007; Wartenberg 2007), while also sometimes talking in this way, have appealed to an analogy between at least some literary fictions (for example, again, Graham Greene's *The Third Man*) and scientific and philosophical thought experiments, which are themselves short fictional narratives (for example Galileo's "Tower" thought experiment and John Searle's "Chinese Room" thought experiment). Whether this analogy is successful for at least some of the kinds of "learning" credited to literary fictions, however, will depend upon one's views about the cognitive virtues of thought experiments in general (see Davies 2010 for a discussion of this question), and also upon how one accounts for the much greater detail in literary and cinematic fictions (Smith 2006).

Fictions, fictional characters and the emotions

Some have ascribed another kind of cognitive value to fictions, claiming that engagement with the latter can effect cognitively desirable changes in the emotional or perceptual dispositions of the reader. For example, Iris Murdoch (1967) claims that reading fiction helps us to develop a clearer vision that sees the real world objectively, rather than in terms of our own self-interest. Again, on one plausible reading of Aristotle's *Poetics*, the "catharsis" produced by the experience of tragic dramatic fictions shapes our emotional dispositions so that we pity and fear those things that rationally merit such emotional responses, thereby harmonizing emotion and reason.

Catharsis – the "proper pleasure" of tragedy – presupposes that we can be moved to emotions such as pity and fear in watching what we take to be a tragic fiction. But if we take a narrative to be fictional, it seems that we generally do not believe that what we are viewing or reading is a representation of actual events that have occurred to actual people. In that case, it is unclear how we can be moved by the narrated events to feel genuine pity or fear for the protagonists, if, as many have claimed, there is an essential cognitive component to emotions. On standard "cognitivist" theories of the emotions, one can respond emotionally to the death of Cordelia, for

example, only if one believes that she is an actual person who is undergoing or has undergone the trials described in the story. It seems, therefore, that either (1) we do not feel genuine emotions in reading or watching known fictions, or (2) we genuinely believe that real events are befalling real people when we engage with such fictions, or (3) it is false that emotional states have an essential cognitive component of the sort proposed by cognitivist theories. While our behavioral dispositions in engaging with fictions rule against (2), both (1) and (3) have their defenders. In defense of (1), it can be claimed either that we merely make-believe that we are feeling real emotions (Walton 1990), or that our genuine affective responses are not real emotions but something phenomenologically similar that accompanies our make-belief (Currie 1990: ch. 5). Defenders of (3), on the other hand, maintain that we can be moved to genuine emotions by merely entertaining the thought of certain things occurring (Carroll 1990: 60–88; Lamarque 1996: ch. 7).

Another question posed by our imaginative and affective engagement with fictional narratives is the status of those characters, places and events depicted therein that have no real counterparts. Of what do I imagine certain things, and for what do I feel certain things, when I watch a performance of *King Lear* and feel for Cordelia? The status of "fictional characters" and our ability to talk about and affectively relate to such entities has taxed not only philosophers of art but also philosophers of language, and treatments of these issues have often drawn on technically sophisticated work in metaphysics and the philosophy of language (for a detailed discussion of these issues, see Currie 1990: ch. 4). Bertrand Russell (1905), for example, sought to account for our ability to talk about the present king of France while also denying the existence of such a being. In response to those who felt that such abilities require that fictional or nonexistent entities must have *some* kind of being – "subsistence" – Russell argued that this reflected a failure to grasp the logical structure of our language. But our ability to talk about fictional characters – as being, for example, the creations of their authors – suggests a less reductive approach and has motivated the idea that fictional characters are "abstract artifacts" of some kind (Thomasson 1999; van Inwagen 1977). Debates over such matters again transcend our present concern with fictions, however, and engage more general issues about the place of so-called "abstract entities" – musical or literary works, for example – in the arts.

See also Interpretation (Chapter 30), Imagination and make-believe (Chapter 31), Literature (Chapter 50).

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33
NARRATIVE

Paisley Livingston

The enormous, multidisciplinary literature on narrative presents a wide range of contentions. Instead of attempting a comprehensive survey of this literature, this chapter will focus on basic claims about the nature of narrative and on other issues of direct relevance to aesthetics and the philosophy of art.

Locating narrative

A first issue concerns the category to which narratives belong. In some research on narrative, the terms "discourse" or "text" name the overarching genus. All narratives are discourses or texts, then, though some discourses or texts are not narratives. It can objected, however, that some of the nonverbal items that are commonly classified as narratives are not texts or discourses. One alternative is to shift to a Grice-inspired usage of "utterance," construed broadly to designate any act or performance (or product thereof) expressive of an attitude (Davis 1992, 2003). Yet some people allow that a sequence of thoughts or dreams can be a narrative, and if this is correct, public expression is not a necessary condition. A possible solution is to situate narrative within some even broader category, such as representation, understood as anything that can be the bearer of content.

Another preliminary topic concerns the conceptual relations between narrative and fiction (Lamarque 1990; Ryan 1997). Three salient options should be mentioned.

First, on an account of fiction advocated by some post-structuralists (White 1980, 1987), narratives are thought to be fictions because it is assumed that all narratives involve a selective, conventional and ultimately misleading manner of organizing and presenting experience. Given the additional assumption that representations having such features are aptly characterized as fictions, it is concluded that all narratives are fictions.

Second, according to a common literary classification, the word "fiction" refers to a species of prose that always takes the form of a narrative or story (as in "Fiction includes novels, short stories and novellas, but not poetry or fables"). Given that usage, all fiction is narrative, but not all narratives are fiction.

Third, following influential pragmatic accounts of the distinction between fiction and nonfiction (e.g. Frege 1997 [1918]; MacDonald 1964; Wolterstorff 1980; Currie

1990), narrative representations are fictions only if they express make-believe or convey imagined, unasserted content. Since narrative utterances or works can be assertions, not all narratives are fictional given this understanding of fictionality.

What is a narrative?

How do narrative utterances, thoughts or representations differ from nonnarrative ones? A common response (Genette 1980 [1972]: 29), which is that a narrative must tell or convey a story, shifts the burden onto the story/nonstory distinction, which is also controversial and in need of elucidation. The task, then, is to identify story-constitutive contents, and in doing so one relies on assumptions about how the content of a representation is determined. This difficult topic cannot be surveyed here.

While many theorists have proposed necessary and sufficient conditions on being a narrative, others characterize narrative as a matter of degree (Herman 2002: 91–92; Ryan 2005; Currie 2010). Some works, such as *The Old Man and the Sea*, are taken to be prototypical narratives, whereas others may be only somewhat story-like or low on the scale of "narrativity." The latter expression is a term of art for a property, or cluster of properties or processes, deemed to contribute to or determine a representation's status as a narrative.

Some of the most prominent and influential ideas in the literature about what makes something a narrative or a story can be outlined schematically as follows.

(1) *Conditions on content*. A representation is a narrative or story if and only if (or less ambitiously, to the extent that) it represents:

  (1.1) at least one event or change of state (Genette 1966; Prince 1973);
  (1.2) the conscious experience of at least one agent or character (Herman 2009);
  (1.3) at least one teller or presenter of events or actions (Altman 2008: 15–16; Chatman 1990; Genette 1980 [1972]; Levinson 1996: 250–51);
  (1.4) at least one explicit or implicit narratee addressed by the fictional narrator (Prince 1987: 57);
  (1.5) at least two events or actions linked by the requisite narrative connection, where such a connection holds just in case (or is strong to the extent that) the events or actions:

    (1.5.1) pertain to a single, unifying subject (Prince 1987; Schmid 2005);
    (1.5.2) are temporally ordered (Prince 1982: 4);
    (1.5.3) are causally related (Danto 1985: 251–52; Carroll 2001);
    (1.5.4) constitute an agent's continuous attempt to solve problems or realize a goal or goals (Aristotle 1967 [*c.*330 BC]; MacIntyre 1981; Wilensky 1983; Bower and Rinck 1999);
    (1.5.5) establish an "emotional cadence" such as expectation and relief (Velleman 2003);
    (1.5.6) are surprising, unusual (Bruner 2010) or otherwise "tellable" (Labov 1972).

(2) *Conditions on intended or actual functions or effects*:

(2.1) narratives are meant to entertain (Brewer and Lichtenstein 1982);
(2.2) narratives play an explanatory role, where the explanation (actual or fictional) involves the linking of particular events without explicit laws or regularities (Lloyd 1989);
(2.3) where this pseudo-explanatory function makes the representation a likely source of irrational belief formation (Dawes 2001);
(2.4) narratives provide a valuable representation of aspects of human experience (such as personal identity or selfhood) that cannot be given in nonnarrative forms (Bruner 1986; Carr 1991; Hardy 1975; MacIntyre 1981; Nussbaum 1990; Schapp 1953).

Assessing the options

Opinion is quite divided on the question of which combination of these (or other) conditions best characterizes narrative. For example, Peter V. Lamarque (2004) accepts only (1.3), (1.5) and (1.5.2), whereas many influential theorists of narrative (e.g. Ryan 2006) defend assumptions about a scalar conception of narrative that conjoin (1.2), (1.3) and most or all of the conditions in (1.5) (that is, conditions meant to identify the narrative-constitutive relations between represented events or actions). And many are the publications on narratives and stories that unfurl the sorts of bold normative claims signaled by (2.2) and (2.3) in our list.

Are there good and sufficient grounds for settling on any one of the many different conceptions of narrative that can be derived from the conditions outlined above? Some general considerations pertaining to this question should be mentioned before we turn to claims made for and against any of the particular conditions or combinations of conditions.

Theorists urging a favored usage of "narrative" typically appeal to our intuitions concerning which examples should and should not count as conveying a story. It is far from clear, however, that any detailed and coherent bed of intuitions awaits the theories. It is easy, of course, to concoct a list of items that many people may be expected to classify as stories, but when we range a bit further, intuitions clash and blur. There are two distinct problems here: first, in cases where people agree that some item is a prototypical narrative, the basis for such a classification may be uncertain or divergent. For example, people do not spontaneously agree over why *The Old Man and the Sea* is a narrative; second, in many cases there is disagreement or uncertainty as to whether a given item should be classified as a narrative. Can the notation of the moves in a chess game be a narrative? Can works of pure music, still photographs and buildings be narratives? Some people say they can, while others deny it.

Attempts have been made to investigate the relevant intuitions by means of empirical surveys of children's and adults' responses. Yet the authors of such studies have reported that it is not clear how to disentangle opinions about what counts as a story as such from intuitions about what is a *good* story, or at least one deemed worth telling in some context (Stein 1982; Stein and Policastro 1984; Klein 2004).

Empirical studies also suggest that subjects' intuitions often diverge sharply over what counts as a good story (Ramírez-Esparza and Pennebaker 2007), which makes it hard to investigate putative correlations between story-related activities and this or that specific function or consequence.

Returning now to the list of possible ingredients of narrativity, even the most elementary steps are more problematic than it may first appear. Still photographs and still-life paintings are sometimes taken as prototypical examples of representations having zero or very little narrativity. Yet if we allow, as arguably we should, that the content of a representation can include implicit content (such as anticipated events or actions and their implicit temporal relations to an explicitly depicted, static state of affairs), it turns out that many still-life paintings and still photographs satisfy condition (1.1) as well as some of the other conditions listed under (1.5). Does that make them narratives (to some significant degree), or does this show that these conditions are not sufficient and should be strengthened to exclude these images from the house of narrative?

Although conditions (1.1) and (1.5), which involve represented events, are often deemed unproblematic, students of metaphysics know that there are competing accounts of the identification and individuation of events. Divergent assumptions on this topic have implications for accounts of narrative, since we can only say whether representations convey a story (or whether two representations convey "the same" story) by identifying the events figuring within the representations' contents. Aaron Smuts (2009) presents a dilemma involving the consequences of opting either for a strict or for a lenient account of event-based story identity. According to the strictest view, two representations convey the same story just in case they convey all and only the same events. Such a strict assumption subverts prevalent talk of two different works telling the same story. Yet opting for weaker notions of story equivalence leads to the opposite problem, as many different works or even entire genres would have to be recognized as telling the same story. It is unclear at what level of abstraction the qualitative identity of events or stories is to be determined.

Noël Carroll (2007: 11) comments that the supposition that causation is essential to the narrative connection is "the common view." Yet this proposal remains difficult to assess unless some more specific ideas about causation are provided. William Labov (1997) asserts that the storyteller applies a "personal theory of causality" in the construction of a narrative. One alternative to that rather open-ended proposal is to contend that some universal or quasi-universal "folk" conception of causation is operative for storytellers and their audiences alike. This could be right, but what is this folk conception of causation and how was it identified? Is it a matter of some species of counterfactual dependence, a kind of nomological sufficiency, ideas about manipulation and energy transfer, or some other basic and widespread notion?

In his discussion of a causation-based approach to "the narrative connection," Carroll (2001) explicitly links the intuition that narrative has something to do with causation with the analysis of causation set forth and critiqued by John Leslie Mackie (1965, 1974). According to this analysis, story event E_1 is the cause of story event E_2 just in case E_1 is an *insufficient but nonredundant part of an unnecessary but sufficient* (INUS) condition on E_2's occurrence. It seems highly unlikely, however, that any such thoughts guide the audience's spontaneous judgments regarding narrativity.

Nor does the INUS hypothesis command consensus among the experts on causation (Pearl 2000: 313–16). Another option is to hold out for the correct metaphysics of causation, a prospect challenged by those who contend, following Bertrand Russell, that fundamental physics has no such place for the latter (cf. Price and Corry 2007).

Agency-related conditions, such as (1.2) and (1.5.4), while commonly cited, remain controversial. Clauses that make agents and their intentional actions essential to narrative clearly suit the interests of scholars in the humanities, but on what grounds was it established that a historical account of a glacier or a galaxy is not a narrative? That literary and cinema scholars do not normally do research on such representations does not seem a good enough reason.

Additional objections may be raised against the even stiffer condition according to which narrative requires actions or other ingredients that are surprising or unexpected given the "canonical circumstances" (Bruner 2010: 47). Such a stipulation contradicts ordinary usage, which allows that there could be unsurprising and highly predictable stories. More generally, building strong normative conditions into one's concept of a narrative tends to yield contradictory judgments as to whether a particular item is a narrative. In ordinary usage, neither "good story" nor "bad story" is an oxymoronic expression. Those who warn us that stories trigger the salience and sample biases (Bishop and Trout 2005; Dawes 2001) have yet to present statistical evidence in support of their generalizations about the bad cognitive effects of stories. Nor do we have solid evidence supporting a generalization to the effect that stories tend on the whole to be beneficial. This is hardly surprising given the notorious difficulty of measuring the "effects" of fuzzy categories of representations.

Narrators and narration

Item (1.3) on our list rules that the cast of characters in every story must include a narrator, but is this really so? Paying attention to a narrator's manner of narrating the events is often crucial to the appreciation of a work of narrative fiction (Booth 1961), but it does not follow that we should accept the oft-asserted thesis that narrative entails a narrator. Challengers of this thesis have been quite numerous and include David Bordwell (1985), Anders Pettersson (1990: 104–13) and Nicholas Wolterstorff (1980: 163–79).

The question of whether narrative entails a narrator is hopelessly ambiguous unless we draw distinctions among different kinds of narrators. Many such distinctions have been devised (Genette 1980; Ryan 2001). For example, the device of the "voice-over" narrator, which is widely used in documentary films, is also sometimes employed in cinematic fictions, but not all movies have this sort of narrator, and there is no such thing in written narratives. So what kind of narrator, if any, figures necessarily in all narratives?

Consider what Gregory Currie (1995: 265–66) calls a "controlling narrator." This term of art refers to a narrator whose mode of presenting the story should be imagined to coincide with the work's vehicle (e.g. the text, audiovisual display or other perceptible item). For example, the first-person narrator of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* is a controlling narrator because it is true in the fiction that

the text of this novel gives us his account, verbatim or literatim, and nothing else. We are to imagine, then, that the story is conveyed to us by the character, and this imagining is crucial to our appreciation of the novel. In contrast, Esther is not the controlling narrator of Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, because the chapters that we are to imagine as having been written or spoken by her are accompanied by chapters narrated by someone else. The character explicitly refers to her "portion of these pages," which implies that she is somehow aware that her chapters make up only part of the text.

Should a "narrative entails a *controlling* narrator" thesis be accepted? This thesis is too strong, for in nonfiction narratives, an author can speak in his or her own voice, and no separate, narrating agent need be imagined. For example, the words in John Stuart Mill's autobiographical narrative are presented to us as his own and not as those of some fictional figure.

If it is accepted that not all nonfictional narratives have a controlling narrator, we may still ask whether all fictional ones have them. Advocates of this kind of thesis are typically moved by what could be called the epistemic constraints on story knowledge. The telling or presenting of the story is a necessary part of the story; if fictional story events are to be known, there must be some way in which evidence about them is conveyed or made manifest, and this within the reader's or spectator's make-believe or imagining. In other words, the thought is that interpreters of a story should ask themselves how evidence about the story events is being conveyed. This question cannot be answered uniquely in terms of the activities of the author, real or implied, since such a person does not present the words of the text as his or her own true account of the events in the story. A key assumption, then, is that if a fictional story has been told, it has to have been told or presented *as true* within that very story by someone.

One question about this line of reasoning is whether it holds across all media. One may be tempted to object, for example, that even if verbal narrative fictions always have a controlling narrator (or narrators), cinematic fictions never do. Yet there are some plausible counterexamples to the latter proposition, such as *Strass* (2001), a mock documentary in which it is to be imagined that everything the audience sees and hears is the product of a film crew that has made a movie about the goings on at a theater school in Belgium. What the spectator actually sees and hears is the audiovisual display made by writer-director Vincent Lannoo and his collaborators, but the spectator should imagine seeing a motion picture made by the documentary film crew in the story. Although it would be odd to refer to this film crew as a narrator, it makes good sense to say that this is a story the contents of which include a group of controlling, fictional presenters.

An ongoing and somewhat tangled debate surrounds the thesis that some sort of fictional presenter figures within the contents of *all* visual or audiovisual fictional narratives (Carroll 2009; Currie 1995, 2010; Gaut 2004, 2010; Kania 2005; Thomson-Jones 2008, 2012; Wilson 1976, 1986, 2011). Opponents of this thesis point to visual fictions where there is no evidence warranting us to imagine a presenter who somehow shows us or presents the events in the story. Narrative paintings are plausible examples. A painting can depict several events or actions that stand in a perspicuous temporal relation to each other, thereby satisfying at least some of the salient conditions

on narrativity surveyed above. The discerning observer of such a painting need not imagine the presence or activity of a fictional presenter within the realm depicted by the picture. If it is the case that in recognizing and understanding such a painting's contents, we imagine or make-believe that we see several temporally related story events, it is not the case that we imagine seeing a painting or other image that has been made and presented by some *fictional* artist.

In the cinema, the imagining of an internal photographic or other representation of story events can be warranted, as is the case with *Strass* and some other mock documentaries. Yet what is to be said more generally about *controlling* cinematic narrators or other narrating instances in fiction films? George M. Wilson (2011) weighs the strengths and weaknesses of a number of distinct versions of the thesis that we "imagine seeing" the events in a cinematic fiction. He allows that in some films there is no warranted imagining of a personal presenter or film crew whose work presents the story events in a mediated fashion. Nor, however, do we imagine simply that we are peering directly into the world of the story in the absence of all fictional narration or presenting. What is necessary to fictional narratives in the cinema is not a narrator, but some kind of fictional mediation of the story events, even if the means or mechanism that constitutes this mediation or narration is "fictionally indeterminate" (2011: 79). This thesis is meant to maintain a strong narrative–narration entailment while forestalling "silly questions" (Walton 1990: §4.5) about how the story events could have been known, represented or conveyed by a narrator situated in the world of the story (for a discussion of Wilson's views, see Livingston 2012 and forthcoming).

Narrative and artistic value

What relations obtain between narrativity and the artistic or aesthetic value of works of art? Various generalizations have been offered in response to this hard question. It is fair to say that the sweeping theses in this vein remain controversial.

Narrativity has been said to serve, or even be essential to, the creation of fictional works having an epistemic value deriving from their verisimilitude or literal truthfulness. The narrative presentation of agents and actions is said to engage our emotions through the anticipation and evaluation of outcomes (Hogan 2003, 2011). Narratives, it is often claimed, offer insight into action and moral agency (see Carroll 1998 for a survey). It is objected to this kind of claim that the generalizations about behavior conveyed by fictional narratives are either trivial, insufficiently grounded in reliable evidence, or otherwise fallacious, as in the claim that narratives systematically promote *post hoc ergo propter hoc* reasoning (Barthes 1966: 10). It has been conjectured that narrative fosters the "attribution error" whereby behavior is given a pseudo-explanation in terms of personality traits or "character" (Currie 2010; Doris 2002).

In his discussion of narrative and historiography, Arthur C. Danto (1985) argues that the narrative format enables subtle forms of anachronism or *prolepsis* (a property is "proleptic" if its obtaining at a given time depends on some event that has yet to occur at that time). Knowing the story's outcome, the historian imbues earlier events with the specious property of literally being a prefiguration of subsequent events,

just as John the Baptist is made to foreshadow Jesus in the Christian understanding of *figura* (Auerbach 1959). For the nonprophetic historian or storyteller, no such proleptic property or significance is properly applicable to the prior event at the time of its occurrence, nor can an event, once past, acquire new properties. Yet Danto's strictures on historiography need not apply to all fictions. Even if it is granted that proleptic properties are impossible, it does not follow that their representation could not make a positive contribution to some work of narrative fiction.

Critiques of narrative's putative epistemic vices sometimes target closure, the basic complaint being that narratives, unlike life, provide overly tidy answers to the main questions they raise. This is a good criticism of many simple-minded stories, such as those where killing the monster solves all of the problems, but the error in question is hardly endemic to narrative as such. Many narratives are designed to raise questions without answering them, and some express probing conjectures regarding important and difficult issues.

In conclusion, it may be observed that uncertainty and divergence with regard to the nature of narrativity carry over to answers ventured in response to big questions about the artistic, epistemic and other values of narratives. And even if some reasonably sharp hypothesis about the nature of narrativity were somehow confirmed, the normative generalizations about narrative representations based on it would remain problematic, since the overall values and meanings of a particular work are underdetermined by the properties constitutive of its narrativity (Livingston 2009).

See also Value of art (Chapter 28), Interpretation (Chapter 30), Imagination and make-believe (Chapter 31), Fiction (Chapter 32), Literature (Chapter 50), Film (Chapter 53).

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34
METAPHOR

Garry L. Hagberg

It is evident that metaphors are common in the arts and in art criticism as well as our talk about the arts more generally. Thus an account of metaphor will form part of a complete understanding of the arts. But some have argued that metaphor is not just something of which the arts avail themselves; it is at the root of the arts (or shares a common root with them). Why this is so will be clear once we better understand the nature of metaphor. We will thus consider, first, a number of prominent philosophical accounts both ancient and modern (including reductivist accounts, conceptual-comparison accounts, accounts emphasizing the creative nature of metaphor, and some recent alternative accounts) and, second, conceptions of the relation between metaphor and the arts and the role metaphor plays within them.

Accounts of metaphor

Reductivist accounts

It is Aristotle who gives the – to put it one way – foundational account of the subject. He writes, "metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy" (*Poetics* 1457b, see Aristotle 1984). It was in the *Poetics* that Aristotle laid down the influential structural analysis of metaphor in which *A* is to *B* as *X* is to *Y*. This form, when filled with content such as "life is to old age as day is to evening," yields metaphors such as "the evening of life" and "the old age of the day." Networks of associations, of connotations and of implications are shifted in this way, and we can come to see the subject term of the metaphorical sentence in, as we say, a new light.

Quintilian, in the first century AD, introduced metaphor through simile, suggesting that "Achilles is like a lion" (in battle) is more readily comprehensible than the metaphorical "Achilles is a lion" (Quintilian 1996). The simile is immediately accessible because it does not generate problems of the truth conditions for the assertion. Whether Achilles is like a lion in battle is straightforwardly determinable as true or false, but the metaphorical assertion "Achilles is a lion" is of course *literally* false, and yet – and here the complexities begin – in a different sense, true. Thus some have preferred theories of metaphorical meaning suggesting that the meaning of the

metaphorical assertion is different from the literal (and false) assertion identical in words but not in meaning to the metaphorical assertion. The simple thesis here is the theory of the elliptical simile: a metaphor condenses the content of the simile by removing, but still implying, the explicit comparison (the "like" or "as" phrase), thus making the same assertion as the simile, via elliptical implication. The metaphorical assertion "Achilles is a lion" only appears to put forth a claim that is both false and different in meaning content from the parallel simile, and the distinct problem of metaphorical meaning on this account evaporates. It will be evident that this conception of metaphor greatly emphasizes the central place occupied by literal assertion (and by extension, literal description) in our larger account of meaning and communication; the metaphorical assertions are made descriptively palatable by transforming them back into their "parent" similes, which again have far more readily available truth conditions. But serious questions have been raised concerning whether any such backtracking transformation is fair to the actual content (content of a kind that seems enriched beyond the reach of the literal origination sentence) of the metaphorical sentence.

Metaphor has also often been construed as a conceptual comparison in which the primary subject, Juliet for example, is compared to a secondary subject, in this case, the sun. More precisely, the reader is invited to imaginatively compare various similarities as they are suggested, not by the *writer* in terms of a pre-cognized and closed set of specific qualities or attributes, but by the conjoined *words* themselves. And as every schoolchild knows, the context will determine which qualities or attributes are consistent with the intention (but again where this intention of metaphorical meaning is not fully prespecified); thus "Juliet is a fiery ball of burning gas exerting enormous gravitational influence" is fairly wide of the mark. "Juliet is the very source of light and warmth, necessary for life itself, and indeed the center of Romeo's universe" is considerably more on target.

It is conceptually far less complex to ascertain the coherence or compatibility of any two literal utterances than any two metaphorical ones. The assertions "life is easy" and "life is difficult" are, in the absence of further specifics, each more readily verifiable or falsifiable, and taken together more obviously incompatible than the related pair of assertions "life is a bowl of cherries" and "life is no bed of roses." And claims such as "all the world's a stage" can seem to move us rapidly toward epistemic disorientation: one is not at all sure how to begin to determine the truth conditions for such an utterance. Indeed, the search for truth conditions seems strangely irrelevant to the meaning, or to the understanding, of that Shakespearean observation; it seems to propose a way of seeing the world, a distinct perspective upon it, rather than making a true-or-false assertion. (Thus when one says, in response to this claim, "How true," one may be using epistemological garb to dress what is actually an expression of agreement with the person's way of seeing the circumstance at hand that prompted the Shakespearean remark in the first place.)

Here, however, we move outside the general reductive consensus that the associated simile is the true (or false) content of the metaphor. In sum, the reductive impulse in dealing with metaphor is provided fuel by a prior fundamental concern for descriptive truth. This concern motivates Hobbes's surely too extreme remark that reasoning with metaphors is nothing more than "wandering amongst innumerable absurdities" and

that, in the "rigorous search of Truth," all metaphors are "in this case utterly excluded. For seeing they openly professe deceit; to admit them into Councell, or Reasoning, were manifest follies" (Hobbes 1968: 117). Similarly, Locke remarked that metaphors are "for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgement" (Locke 1975: 508). For such extreme reductionists, metaphors are best avoided, and, if unavoidable, then reduced to epistemologically manageable similes. But given the richness and the importance of metaphorical usage in contexts of complex and intricate human interaction (one significant part of which is found in art and aesthetics), one might reasonably feel rather concerned about the baby and the bathwater with reductionism of this kind.

Metaphor and creation

The revolution in the recent discussion of metaphor dates to Max Black's 1955 essay, which builds on the foundations laid down by I. A. Richards (1991). Black developed the claim that metaphors possess a cognitive value internally of a kind that cannot be reduced to literal paraphrase. Thus he rejected substitutive conceptions (*A* is to *B* as *X* is to *Y*), comparison conceptions (Juliet is comparable to the source of warmth, light and so on) and elliptical-simile reductionism. Black articulated a decidedly *creative* conception of metaphor, arguing that the similarities into which a metaphor offers insight are created through the novel conjunction of terms, and *they* do not merely describe a set of similarities already resident in the perceptual world. The distinctive interactions of the sets of ideas associated with each of the two terms of a metaphor – or at least a good one – offer a unique insight that is neither possible in strictly literal terms nor "sayable" within those terms. (Hence we should not expect the relations between metaphorical sentences and truth conditions to be simple or straightforward.)

Black's position constitutes the emancipation of metaphor from the domination of the literal assertion and has opened the way to detailed studies of the relations between artistic and metaphorical-linguistic practices. Although this revolution is still under way (with recent very significant advances), it was Nietzsche (1979) who anticipated it in characteristically extreme form, doing no less than (as a kind of linguistic "transvaluation," to use one of Nietzsche's terms) asserting the primacy of the metaphorical over the literal. Metaphor – for Nietzsche, anything but a rhetorical device for the generation of writerly color – is the essential foundation not only of linguistic meaning but indeed of all cognition. In places he argued that perception itself is a metaphoric process, setting the stage for more recent discussions of what has been posited as the metaphoric structure of the arts. He argued that drawing the line demarcating the literal and the metaphorical is not itself a simple task, because common parlance is very heavily populated (so to speak) with dead metaphors, that is, metaphors that are no longer recognized for their novel insight-generating admixtures of terms. Nonphilosophical instances are plentiful and unproblematic: we quite naturally now speak of a clock's face and hands.

Philosophical instances are also plentiful but considerably more problematic in determining the precise extent to which a phrase is in fact metaphorical. Given Nietzsche's position we naturally must face the question whether the phrase "the

foundations of knowledge" is an architectural metaphor. If so, is it epistemologically misleading? And do spatial metaphors, once adopted, subsequently determine our thinking about philosophical psychology? Examples (not Nietzsche's, but illustrative of his view) are readily found in phrases such as thoughts "in the head," "the back of the mind," "the inner recesses of the mind," "the motivations behind the utterance" and "the privacy of the mind."

It is thus not a simple matter even to say that we would do well to consider the arts *in the light of* the linguistic practices to which they stand parallel (and that motivate the use of the commonly employed phrase "visual language," for the very phrase "in the light of" is metaphorical, although certainly moribund if not deceased). Speakers of language, it is thought by the proponents of this Nietzschean view, naturally forget, or cover over, the metaphoric nature of all utterance. Truth is "a mobile army of metaphors" which "after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic, and binding" (Nietzsche 1979: 180). It is art that reawakens the slumbering sense of novel, insightful, perceptual-perspectival conjunctions of terms, of images and of their creatively converging sets of associated ideas. On this radical view, the very idea of a fixed literal truth is only a dead metaphor disguised as literal fact.

Recent views

Before proceeding to an examination of the artistic side of the comparison of metaphorical and artistic practice, however, it is necessary to glance at a few more chapters in this still-unfolding history of the theory of metaphor. Donald Davidson put forth a powerful argument concluding that there is no such thing as metaphorical meaning apart from the literal meaning of the words contained in the metaphorical expression: "metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean and nothing more" (Davidson 1979: 30). Davidson identifies the view that "a metaphor, has in addition to its literal sense or meaning, another sense or meaning" (ibid.) as the central mistake of the field to date. He agrees, with many others, that a metaphor cannot successfully be paraphrased, but for the very different reason that, rather than there being a form or variety of meaning not amenable to literal propositional encapsulation, there is no special metaphorical meaning to be paraphrased in the first place.

Davidson builds his argument on the distinction between what words mean on the one hand, and what they are used to accomplish on the other. This broad distinction is not difficult to illustrate. An ironic "nice work" or a sarcastic "oh sure" suggests the splitting-off of use from meaning (where meaning is, if controversially, thought to be identifiable in isolation from usage). Thus "all the world's a stage," while it means just what it says, is used to make an observation on the theatrical, role-playing aspect of life. With metaphor thus located wholly in "the domain of use," Davidson (so far like a number of earlier writers on metaphor) regards it as "something brought off by the imaginative employment of words and sentences," but then adds (very much unlike those earlier writers) "and depends entirely on the ordinary meanings of those words and hence on the ordinary meanings of the sentences they comprise" (Davidson 1979: 30).

Davidson argues against comparison, novelty, ambiguity analogies (that a metaphor, like an ambiguous phrase, has two separate meanings), elliptical similes,

extended-meaning theories (that the use of "face" in the phrase "upon the face of the water" extends the settled or familiar use of "face"), the analogy between using a metaphor and telling a lie (that in both cases we assert something we know to be literally false) and others, indeed, against most of the history of the subject. And with metaphor having no special or distinct meaning, there is, for Davidson, no distinct metaphorical truth – that is, in the *sentences* – for "this is not to deny that there is such a thing as metaphorical truth, only to deny it of sentences" (Davidson 1979: 39).

It is important to see that his position is not by any means an eliminative one (although he is denying the very motivation for other theories of metaphor, the problem of metaphorical truth of sentences): he allows that there is such a thing as metaphorical truth, for "metaphor does lead us to notice what might not otherwise be noticed, and there is no reason, I suppose, not to say these thoughts, and feelings inspired by the metaphor, are true or false" (Davidson 1979: 39). Poetic metaphor can "intimate much that goes beyond the literal meaning of the words." But if "intimation is not meaning," one may wonder why intimation cannot constitute an aspect of meaning when we naturally call it that in certain contexts. Apart from such concerns, however, the openness of metaphorical interpretation or paraphrase is given a secure place: Davidson holds that "the endless character of what we call the paraphrase of a metaphor springs from the fact that it attempts to spell out what the metaphor makes us notice, and to this there is no clear end" (ibid.: 45). And this claim is clearly and tellingly linked to our frequently finding the interpretation of a work of art inexhaustible.

Another view of metaphor is that of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who argue for the pervasiveness of metaphor throughout our language and thought, emphasizing the undetected influence of unconscious central metaphorical concepts that we pre-reflectively take as literal. Unlike Davidson, they believe that metaphorical content holds truth value: the cognitive content of the metaphor, distinct from literal meaning, can be true or false. This cognitive content of the metaphor is constituted by the transference of a mapping (itself a cartographical metaphor) of one distinct domain of experience onto another. The description of mental phenomena in the terminology of visual experience provides an example of experience-domain transference: "casting light" on a subject, "illuminating" it, "seeing" the point, "clouding" the issue and so forth, are usages drawn from bodily experience and projected onto the realm of pure cognition. Indeed, Lakoff and Johnson argue that one layer of metaphorical description often stands, not on literal fact, but (rather like Nietzsche) on another hardened layer of metaphorical description. For example, in alluding in conversation to the "foundational issues" or the "fundamental point," one is not thus alluding to a basis of fact upon which the conversation is constructed, but in turn just to other architectural metaphors. This position has been extended by Lakoff and Turner (1989) into an analysis of poetic metaphor.

A fairly extreme view relates metaphor to metaphysics. Paul Ricoeur (1977) has argued that the employment of metaphor can liberate us from the referentially static or fixed conception of the world that literal language is herein thought to enforce, allowing not only a changed metaphor-induced perception of the world, but more extensively, a changed ontology, indeed no less than a changed world. Metaphor is

construed by Ricoeur as a reorganizational force in metaphysics, and many (such as Hesse and Arbib 1986) who do not endorse that extreme ontological thesis have still investigated with great profit the role that metaphorical speech has played throughout the history of scientific thought.

Another rather extreme view has been advanced by Richard Rorty (1989), who has argued that linguistic change – roughly the move from one Wittgensteinian language game to a subsequent, different game – is the result not of rational progress along a developmental continuum, nor of the improved matching of correspondences between our language and the way the objective external world really is, but rather the result of strong new vocabularies that are often fundamentally metaphorical in nature, and that simply take root in our culture's ongoing conversation and thus shape subsequent thought and talk. Freud, for example, developed what became a culture-wide hybrid or metaphoric language of psychodynamics from the preexistent language of hydrodynamics, so that we speak of mental pressure, force, flow, blockage, outlets and so on. A metaphoric assertion, if true, is for Rorty thus true by acceptance and practice, and not by virtue of a matching of the metaphorical description to the objective features of the object or person described. Metaphoric language is here cut loose from its moorings to any extralinguistic or ontologically objective world of stable referents. The very idea of such moorings is exposed as another contingent and practice-entrenched metaphorical image that is, in truth (if a difficult – indeed it may be argued self-contradictory – concept to wield within this theory), no more epistemologically privileged than any other. Like some of the other views we have considered, metaphors are here believed to shape the contingent conceptual and perceptual world in which we live.

Metaphor and the arts

It will be clear that the foregoing issues and views are immediately relevant to the verbal arts. One need not even speak of an *application* of those issues and theories to verbal arts, precisely because they are already resident within them. The obvious fact is that metaphors are richly woven throughout fiction, poetry and the other verbal arts, and the full explication of the meaning of those works – whether we speak of a distinct metaphoric meaning or only of distinct metaphoric usages of literal meanings – will inevitably entail a consideration of those issues and views. But what of the nonverbal arts? How does the concept of metaphor, however articulated in detail, cast light on the visual and musical arts? A number of writers have extended the concept of metaphor into nonverbal or extraliterary domains, and a number of ways of proceeding present themselves.

The first, building on the broad conception of the nonverbal arts adumbrated by Susanne Langer (1953), is to construe the work of art most fundamentally as a symbol. However this is achieved in detail, the symbolic content of art can then enter into metaphoric relations with other terms or symbols, allowing for the transference of meaning or of associated ideas from one symbolized content to the other. Among countless examples one might choose Goya's court portraits, infamous for having depicted the members of the royal court with horse-like faces. The picture of

the king is thus a symbol, the hint of equine physiognomy another, and their merger within the visual content of the painting, each with its own set of associations, produces an image that functions metaphorically. Interestingly, parallel problems of paraphrase emerge here: the metaphorical sentence "the king is a horse" fails to capture the particular gesture made in the painting, and although one could go on in attempting to capture that visual meaning verbally, it is – as Davidson suggested in the verbal case – unclear just where to stop or just where one has finished the visual-to-verbal interpretative-paraphrastic task. Rather like Romeo's claim, one clearly senses the overall meaning and thus has a sense of where the scope of implication stops *at particular points* (Juliet is not a fiery ball of gas; the king is not steerable by bit and bridle), but the full reach of implication seems to inevitably run beyond the scope of any single set of paraphrastic assertions.

A second way of understanding nonverbal metaphor is as the result of an interaction between two visual forms, each of which is familiar and again brings its complement of connotations, but which, when the two are united, creates a "way of seeing" not previously contained within either visual form and not previously resident in the perceptual world. The main exponents of this view have been Virgil Aldrich (1968) and Carl Hausman (1989). The parallel to the verbal version is clear. One example is Cézanne's landscape painting, in which houses are depicted as volumetric masses contained organically within the landscape and, conversely, masses comprising geological or topological features of the landscape assume a "constructed" aspect or identity. The conceptual result is a way of seeing, or an insight into, an ontological continuity between the natural and the constructed environment that one can only verbally characterize as a "Cézanne-landscape way" of seeing, but that is, despite this apparent verbal limitation, strong enough to change perception in accordance with a new "visual language."

A third way of developing the concept of metaphor in visual form is found in interartwork relations: just as two linguistic terms interpenetrate, so may visual forms. Turner, in making clear that he wanted certain of his sunset seascapes hung next to Claude Lorrain's influential paintings in the same genre, stipulated – to put the matter one way – that the two "terms" of the metaphoric structure be within visual "reach," thereby displaying complex interactions of form, light, design, palette, representational content (specifically in this case atmospheric depiction), technique and related matters. And they are metaphorically structured; they do *interact*. We see the Claude differently after having seen the Turner.

A fourth way, put forward by David Summers (1991, 1998), has been to develop the concept of what he calls *real* metaphor. Building on the etymological point that the word "metaphor" comes from the Greek *metapherein*, meaning "to transfer, to bear" or "to carry over or across," Summers argues that we should reawaken our sense, from our knowledge of and participation in cultural rites and customs, that absent entities, persons or powers can be made in a distinctive aesthetic sense "present" through substitution. Stones in place of gods, subsequent anthropomorphized images and ritualistic painting and paradigmatically, sculptural objects, have functioned in this way. The objects function not so much by referring to or representing the absent entities but rather by standing in for them, rendering their associations present. One may question the use of the word "real" here, since the associated ideas

are (really) present while the real entity is not, but for Summers, the transference of meaning, or of idea-association sets, is the vital issue.

Two more major steps forward in working out the connections between metaphor and the arts have been taken in recent years. One, offered by A. E. Denham (2000), shows an acute awareness of the problem of truth values for metaphors and that problem's significance for counting literary texts as legitimate sources of moral knowledge. Denham underscores the distinction between an accurate and full reporting upon the storm we witnessed yesterday in external, meteorological terms and the storm as *we* witnessed it: in the former case we will use an appropriate scientific vocabulary, and in the latter we will be better off to use poetic or at least metaphorical language. The criteria for the truth of the former cannot without loss (or without a kind of epistemic mishandling) be applied to the latter, nor – of central importance for Denham – can the truth content of the latter be reduced to some part of the former.

Denham argues that we very often employ metaphor as the *first and only* language of inner phenomenological experience (and sometimes, like Henry James, we employ a second or third metaphor to further explicate or investigate the content or implications of the first; the literal is not here the highest court of appeal with regard to the meanings of the metaphorical sentences describing our experience). So what then of the truth conditions? They are concerned with "aspects" of metaphorically describable experience, rather than with epistemologically traditional word–world matching. Here, the special kind of content given description by metaphor is (1) meaningful, (2) not reducible to other (literal) language, (3) cognitive (and not merely affective where it would be alien to the concept of truth) and (4) of such a fine-grained character that our "standard lexicon" of linguistic concepts proves insufficient or ill-fitted to the task of conveying a full sense of what that experience is, was or will be like (Denham 2000: 283).

The most recent (as of this writing) major advance in working through the significance of metaphor (in terms of linguistic meaning, artistic meaning and, more broadly, human communication) has been made by Ted Cohen (2008). Fundamentally, Cohen sees that there is a deep connection, one that is nothing short of constitutive of what we human beings are, that exists between irreducibly meaningful *A–B* comparisons (that is, to see one thing as another that it plainly – that is, literally – is not) and the acts of imagination that allow us to see ourselves as another. Seeing that we do not invariably understand each other with any sophistication through the employment of declarative literal propositions ("The cat is on the mat"), Cohen says that the implicature of a metaphorical expression is never wholly contained within its sentence, i.e. we might say that the novelist is a psychotherapist, but in doing so, we are then rightly understood if our interlocutor says (drawing out one line of implicature) that the reader is a patient. And if our interlocutor then queries, "And what then is a critic – the doctor's nurse or the patient's confidante?" we see the investigation of metaphorical implicature in action. The metaphorical assertion creates a new kind of compound that possesses the power to give rise to new understanding of the subject term of the metaphorical sentence. And that understanding is occasioned by the creative (literally false) description that shows the subject of the metaphorical sentence in a new light. For Cohen, the truth of the matter here is a

delicate issue: it is not merely that subjects *A* and *B* have a property in common that was previously undetected (and so metaphorical truth cannot be elucidated in the rather simple way of confirming the presence of a newfound common property). It is rather that *A* can now be *imagined* to have a property that *B* has, but that *A* clearly does not possess. Yet that imaginative transferral of a property shows something that is not perfectly capturable without loss in any other terms (Winston Churchill saying "Mussolini is a utensil" is an example). Cohen can thus explain with considerable nuance how it is that a metaphorical observation can usher in a dramatic change of vision or understanding without any single new literal fact being imported into the proceedings. Language of precisely this kind extends throughout our talk with each other about matters of human concern, and it extends throughout our talk about meaning and interpretation in the arts.

It will be obvious that there are many further contributions to the understanding of metaphor since Aristotle, and countless examples of both metaphorical usages in the verbal arts and metaphorical structures (or, variously, analogies to the verbal structure of metaphor) throughout the nonverbal arts, the examination of which space does not allow. But this glance at the issues suggests that (what we call) a distinctive kind of light can indeed be shed on the arts by investigating metaphor. This is so precisely because in those cases – very many cases – where a metaphor or metaphoric structure is housed within a work of art, a fuller understanding of the power, scope and significance of that work is invariably afforded by a fuller understanding of the nature and function of the metaphor contained within it.

See also Interpretation (Chapter 30), Creativity (Chapter 42), Literature (Chapter 50).

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35
DEPICTION

Catharine Abell

Depiction is a form of representation exhibited by figurative, but not abstract, paintings, drawings and photographs. Both abstract and figurative paintings can represent: a slash of red paint may symbolize lust and a painting of a lamb may symbolize Christ. However, all and only figurative works depict. Let us use the term "picture" to refer exclusively to figurative representations. A picture may symbolize Christ in virtue of *depicting* a lamb.

We can ask two distinct philosophical questions about depiction. Firstly, we can ask a metaphysical question: what is it for one thing to depict another? Secondly, we can ask an epistemological question: how are we able to work out that one thing depicts another? These two questions are related. We interpret a picture by determining that it bears some relation to an object in virtue of which it depicts that object. Any adequate answer to one question must therefore be consistent with an adequate answer to the other. Some accounts of depiction seek to answer both questions. Such accounts must specify a relation whose existence between two objects is both necessary and sufficient for one to depict the other and whose existence interpreters could, in principle, ascertain without first knowing that one object depicts the other. The accounts must then explain how interpreters who do not know that one depicts the other are able to determine the existence of this relation. However, some accounts seek solely to answer the metaphysical question. It is possible to do so without either addressing or presupposing any particular answer to the epistemological question. One might, for example, analyze depiction as involving a certain form of reference, without saying anything about how we can work out whether or not the relevant referential relation obtains.

In what follows, let's discuss the metaphysical question first, and then consider how one might address the epistemological question in a manner consistent with an adequate answer to the former.

The metaphysical question: defining depiction

Metaphysical accounts of depiction attempt to specify the relation between picture and object in virtue of which the former depicts the latter. There are two different ways in which to approach this task.

The first is to identify a set of features possession of which is both necessary and sufficient to make a representation depictive. Alternatively, the second is to identify a set of features that is both necessary and sufficient to make anything whatsoever a picture. In addition to distinguishing pictures from other representations, this latter approach distinguishes pictures from things that are not representations.

Although they have different emphases, these two approaches are complementary, rather than competing. The first aims to identify a set of features that distinguish pictures from other representations, while the second aims to provide a unified explanation of why pictures possess those features. In assessing accounts of the second kind, therefore, it is important to consider their ability to explain those features that are generally held to distinguish depictive from nondepictive representations.

Pictures as distinctive kinds of representations

Structural accounts

Structural accounts are the most prominent example of the former approach. They take the most important metaphysical problem in the philosophy of depiction to be that of distinguishing depiction from language and other nondepictive systems of representation. Since they are interested only in explaining distinctions between different kinds of representations, and not in explaining distinctions between depictive representations and things that are not representations, they can appeal to features that pictures have *as representations*. They attempt to identify structural features – features that representations have in virtue of their relationship to other members of the system of representation to which they belong – that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for a representation to be depictive.

Nelson Goodman argued that the structural features of analogicity and relative repleteness are distinctive of depiction as a form of representation (Goodman 1976). A representational system is analog if it is both syntactically dense (any complete ordering of the system's members is such that, between any two representations, there is a third) and semantically dense (any complete ordering of things denoted by the system's syntactically distinct members is such that, between any two denotations, there is a third). For example, the system of representation used by old-fashioned clocks is analog because, between any two positions of the clocks' hands, there is a third position and, between any two of the times represented by those hands, there is a third time its hands could represent. A representational system is relatively replete if, in comparison with other systems, many of its members' features are relevant to determining what they represent. The system whereby analog clocks tell the time is not replete because only the positions of a clock's hands is relevant to determining what it represents. By contrast, pictorial systems of representation are replete, Goodman claims, because such features as color, shape, shade, relative size and texture may all be relevant to determining what a picture depicts.

One might worry that relative repleteness does not suffice to distinguish pictures from all other analog representations. After all, the color, shape and shade of a graph may all be relevant to determining what it represents, although graphs are not pictures, and only the shape of an outline drawing is relevant to determining what it

represents, although it is a picture. John Kulvicki has recently developed a structural account in which he adds a further structural feature, *transparency*, to those Goodman identified as necessary for depiction (Kulvicki 2006).

Kulvicki notes that the marks on a picture surface are consistent with its depicting a wide variety of different things. For example, an outline drawing comprising a circle on top of a rectangle could depict a gatepost, a square-shouldered person, a pepper grinder or any number of other things. A picture's *bare bones content*, Kulvicki argues, incorporates all the properties that all its possible objects have in common: in our example, a circular and a rectangular shape standing in a certain relation. Pictures, he argues, instantiate their own bare bones content. That is, the outline drawing described above exhibits the same circular and rectangular shape in the same relation as do all the things it could depict.

Bare bones content is opposed to *fleshed-out content*, which is what a picture actually depicts. Although a picture of another picture in the same system will generally differ in fleshed-out content from the latter picture (for example, a photograph of a photograph of a building will generally depict a photograph, not a building), Kulvicki argues that both will have the same bare bones content. Transparency, he claims, consists in the fact that any picture of another picture in the same system will share the latter's bare bones content. Outline drawing, for instance, is a transparent system of representation because an outline drawing of the outline drawing described above will exhibit the same shapes in the same relation as the original drawing.

Pictures as distinctive kinds of objects

Unlike structural accounts, those accounts that attempt to characterize depiction in terms of a relation that holds between a picture and an object independently of the former's status as a representation take the most important metaphysical problem in the philosophy of depiction to be that of explaining how pictures come to have the representational content they do.

Resemblance accounts

One intuitively very plausible suggestion is that pictures represent the things they do because they look like, or resemble, those things. Thus, *resemblance accounts* claim that, to depict an object, something must resemble that object. This intuitively appealing solution is, however, rendered problematic by a variety of well-known problems.

Firstly, resemblance is a reflexive relation (everything resembles itself) and a symmetrical relation (if one object resembles another, it follows that the latter object also resembles the former), while depiction is neither (things don't generally depict themselves, and nor does it follow from one thing depicting another that the latter also depicts the former). This is a problem for accounts that claim resemblance is sufficient for depiction. However, it is easily overcome by resemblance accounts that hold that resemblance is merely necessary for depiction.

Nevertheless, the ubiquity of resemblance presents a second problem. While pictures resemble the things they depict, they also resemble every other thing in at least

some respect. Moreover, there are many things they resemble more than the things they depict. For example, a painting of a seascape resembles a still-life painting in more respects than it resembles the scene it depicts. This threatens to trivialize the claim that resemblance is necessary for depiction. Most resemblance theories overcome this difficulty by claiming that resemblance in a *particular* respect is necessary for depiction. So long as pictures resemble their objects in the relevant respect and do not also resemble every other thing in that respect, this makes the appeal to resemblance genuinely explanatory.

A further difficulty threatens to undermine this solution to the problem of ubiquity. Dominic Lopes identifies two constraints on an adequate resemblance account of depiction and argues that, in order to meet one, resemblance accounts must violate the other (Lopes 1996). The *diversity constraint* requires an adequate account of depiction to accommodate the whole range of pictorial styles and types. This includes, for example, realistic and cubist paintings, line drawings and split-style pictures. The difficulty for resemblance accounts is that there does not seem to be a single respect in which pictures in each of the various styles of depiction resemble their objects. For example, Impressionist paintings generally resemble their objects in respect of color, but not always in respect of shape, while black-and-white outline drawings resemble their objects in respect of shape, but not always in respect of color. It seems the only way a resemblance account could meet this constraint is by allowing different respects of resemblance to govern different instances of depiction. Doing so would not automatically reintroduce the problem of the ubiquity of resemblance, so long as every instance of depiction were governed by respects of resemblance that held between the picture at issue and its object, but not between the picture and all other things.

According to the *independence constraint*, however, an adequate resemblance account must appeal only to resemblances that interpreters can access without prior knowledge of depictive content. This constraint applies only to those accounts that seek to answer both the metaphysical question of what it is for something to depict an object, and the epistemological question of how we are able to work out that it does so. One might provide an adequate solution to the former, metaphysical problem, in terms of resemblances whose existence interpreters can grasp only once they know what a picture depicts.

Lopes argues that the only way a resemblance account could meet this constraint is by taking the same respect or respects of resemblance to govern all instances of depiction. He claims that, if the respects of resemblance underlying depiction differed from case to case, one would have no way of knowing what respects of resemblance governed a given picture until one knew what it depicted. If this is correct, any resemblance account that seeks to explain both what pictures are and how we interpret them will violate either the independence or the diversity constraint. Accounts that allow the respects of resemblance governing depiction to vary seem unable to meet the independence constraint, while those that take the same respects of resemblance to govern all cases of depiction seem unable to meet the diversity constraint. Such problems with resemblance accounts have led many philosophers to deny that resemblance is necessary for depiction and to endorse instead one of a variety of different solutions to the problem at hand.

Phenomenological accounts

Those who advocate *phenomenological accounts* claim that, in order for something to depict an object, it must elicit a perceptual experience with a certain phenomenology. For example, Ernst Gombrich claimed that it must produce the illusion of seeing that object (Gombrich 1977), while Richard Wollheim claimed that it must elicit a twofold experience, *seeing-in*, one fold of which is analogous to that of seeing the object face-to-face, and one fold of which is analogous to that of seeing a flat, marked surface (Wollheim 1987). The problem with Gombrich's account is its implausibility. There are very few circumstances in which pictures elicit in us the illusion of seeing their objects, and the few circumstances in which they do are very different from the conditions under which we ordinarily see pictures. Wollheim's account is problematic, too, because it is insufficiently informative. In particular, he fails to specify either exactly how one fold of seeing-in is analogous to the experience of seeing an object face-to-face, or how the other is analogous to that of seeing a flat, marked surface, or how the two aspects of the experience of seeing-in are related to one another. While Wollheim's characterization of the phenomenology of our experience of pictures is plausible, we need to know these details if we are to know exactly how the phenomenology of the experience differs from that of other kinds of experience.

Some philosophers have combined aspects of resemblance and phenomenological accounts, claiming that the phenomenology of our experience of pictures is correctly characterized in terms of resemblance. This approach takes a variety of different forms. Christopher Peacocke claims that, for something to depict an object, our experience of it must resemble the experience we would have of that object were we to see it (Peacocke 1987). It is not clear, however, that this approach does much to avoid the problems to which resemblance accounts are subject. Robert Hopkins claims that, to depict an object, a surface must be experienced as resembling that object (Hopkins 1998). More specifically, he argues that the surface must be experienced as resembling the object in respect of *outline shape*: a shape property akin to that of an object's silhouette, which abstracts from the dimension of depth and hence can be shared by both a three-dimensional object and a two-dimensional picture surface. Hopkins presents his account as a way of spelling out Wollheim's notion of seeing-in, claiming that the two phenomenological folds of the experience are related by the experience of resemblance. His approach manages to avoid some of the problems of resemblance accounts. For example, because we may experience one thing as resembling another without also experiencing the latter as resembling the former, and need not experience anything as resembling itself, his account avoids the problems of the symmetry and reflexivity of resemblance. Moreover, because he insists that all pictures resemble their objects in respect of outline shape, his account also avoids the problem of the ubiquity of resemblance. Nevertheless, as Lopes predicts, his account fails to meet the diversity constraint. It is not plausible that all pictures are experienced as resembling their objects in respect of outline shape.

Recognitional accounts

Recognitional accounts provide another approach to explaining what relation something must bear to an object in order to depict it. They deny that something need elicit

any particular phenomenological response in order to depict an object, but claim instead that it must engage specific subpersonal perceptual mechanisms if it is to do so. For example, Flint Schier and Dominic Lopes both claim that, in order to depict an object, it is necessary for something to engage those mechanisms that are responsible for our ability to recognize that object in the flesh (Lopes 1996; Schier 1986). While they insist that pictures and their objects engage the same subpersonal processing mechanisms, they deny that they need resemble their objects in any particular respect in order to do so, and that their doing so need result in their eliciting experiences with a particular phenomenology.

The empirical psychological literature provides evidence in support of the claim that perceiving a picture of some object engages the same subpersonal perceptual mechanisms as face-to-face perception of that object. For example, John Willats provides a theory of picture perception that endorses this claim (Willats 1997) and David Marr's theory of vision is consistent with it (Marr 1982). However, although recognitional accounts are generally presented as avoiding the problems with resemblance accounts, it is not clear that they do so. For example, they do not obviously meet the diversity constraint. While we are generally able to recognize objects presented under a variety of different guises, it is not clear that perception of cubist paintings and split-style drawings engage our ability to recognize their objects under any of those guises.

A further constraint: the standard of correctness

As they stand, none of the three types of view just outlined is plausibly construed as identifying sufficient conditions for something to depict an object. This is because things that do not depict anything may nonetheless bear each of these relations to an object. For example, the stains on a wall may be visually indistinguishable from a picture of a face, such that they have the same phenomenological features as a picture of a face, engage the same subpersonal perceptual mechanisms as are involved in recognizing a face in the flesh and bear the same resemblance relations to a face as does a picture of a face.

It thus seems that resemblance, phenomenological and recognitional accounts must all identify some further relation that something must bear to an object in order to depict it. What prevents the stains on the wall from depicting a face is that it is purely accidental that they bear the perceptible relations described above to a face. A further relation that constrains the manner in which something must have been produced if it is to depict an object thus looks as if it can overcome this problem. This historical constraint is a *standard of correctness* that determines whether something that meets the necessary condition for depiction described above (whether that condition is to be specified in terms of phenomenology, recognitional resources or resemblance) in fact depicts that object.

There are two distinct schools of thought regarding the nature of the standard of correctness. Some philosophers hold that something must have been intended by its maker to bear the relevant phenomenological, recognitional or resemblance relation to an object if it is to depict it. One objection sometimes made to this view is that, while this may be true of paintings and drawings, it does not apply to photographs, which bear causal rather than intentional relations to their objects.

While it is open to advocates of an intentional standard of correctness to reply that photographs too are ultimately governed by the intentional standard provided by camera designers' intentions, this objection has led some philosophers to claim that two distinct standards of correctness govern depiction: a causal standard for photographs, and an intentional standard for nonphotographic pictures (Hopkins 1998; Wollheim 1987). Others object that even nonphotographic pictures cannot be governed by an intentional standard, since picture-makers can, due to technical incompetence or other factors, succeed in depicting things other than they intended to depict.

Many who reason in this latter way claim that some form of causal standard governs all depiction. While nonphotographic pictures are not directly causally related to their objects in the way that photographs are, Lopes claims that they are indirectly causally related to their objects via a series of preceding information states that have those objects as their sources (Lopes 1996). However, because the information chain linking picture and object may, but need not, incorporate agents' mental states, it is not clear that such a standard captures the fact that pictures are artifacts.

The epistemological problem

Because they seek to explain what it is for a representation to be depictive, and do so by appeal to features that pictures have *as representations*, structural accounts such as Goodman's and Kulvicki's cannot explain what makes a picture have the depictive content it does, or what makes it a representation at all. Consequently, such accounts will not help to answer the epistemological question of how we work out that something depicts an object. To answer this epistemological question, therefore, we need an account of the kind that resemblance, phenomenological and recognitional accounts seek to provide: namely one that addresses the question of what it is for anything at all to be a depictive representation.

In light of the discussion above, we can divide the epistemological problem into two distinct questions: (a) how do we work out that something bears the relation to an object that it must bear in order to depict that object, whether that relation be resemblance-based, phenomenological or perceptual? and (b) how do we work out whether or not something that bears that relation to an object also meets the standard of correctness required for it to depict that object, whether that standard be intentional or causal? Because the latter question seems the more difficult to answer, let us focus our discussion of the epistemological problem on it.

Applying the standard of correctness

However the standard of correctness is construed, we need to be able to determine that the constraints it imposes on pictures' histories of production are met if we are to succeed in interpreting something as a picture. It's not obvious that simply perceiving something would be enough by itself to enable us to access either its causal history or its makers' intentions and thus to determine that it has the history of production that is necessary for it to depict an object. Some philosophers who

advocate an intentional standard of correctness argue that we are able to identify the intentions with which pictures were produced because we possess background knowledge of particular kinds. Thus, Hopkins argues that our knowledge of the kinds of things that exist, the kinds of things that are generally depicted and the various ways in which pictures are produced enable us, together with perception of a picture, to work out what it depicts (Hopkins 1998: 137–38). However, this story does not explain our ability to access the intentions that govern some pictures' content. For example, we are able to interpret pictures with unusual, fantastical depictive content. However, knowledge of the kinds of things that exist and the kinds of things that are generally depicted are of no help in identifying the intentions of a picture-maker with unusual representational aims. Although relatively little has been said about how interpreters might identify a picture's causal history, it is important to note that causal standards of correctness raise epistemological problems similar to those raised by intentional standards.

Resemblance as intention governed

It may be possible to provide a resemblance account of depiction that posits an intentional standard of correctness, but is subject neither to the problems for resemblance accounts identified above, nor the epistemological problems presented by an intentional standard of correctness. The idea is that, instead of specifying the resemblance relation and the standard of correctness independently of one another, one should combine the two, appealing to those intentions in terms of which intentional standards of correctness are generally specified when it comes to characterizing the relation of resemblance that governs depiction. Elsewhere, I have argued that picture-makers' intentions determine which respects of resemblance, among various possiblities, govern any particular instance of depiction (Abell 2009). Because picture-makers' intentions may pick out different respects of resemblance on different occasions, this approach enables different respects of resemblance to govern different instances of depiction, such that there is no single respect of resemblance that is necessary for depiction. It therefore promises to meet the diversity constraint.

Furthermore, it overcomes the problems of symmetry, reflexivity and ubiquity. Whereas resemblance is a symmetrical, reflexive relation, intended resemblance is neither. One object may be intended by its maker to resemble another without the latter being intended to resemble the former. Likewise, an object's maker need not intend it to resemble itself. Restricting the respects of resemblance relevant to depiction to those a picture's maker intends it to bear to other objects overcomes the problem of the ubiquity of resemblance, since not all of the myriad resemblances an object bears to other objects are resemblances its maker intended to obtain.

Nevertheless, this way of unifying the resemblances that govern depiction looks, at first glance, as if it will violate the independence constraint. Given the difficulties identified above with identifying a picture-maker's intentions, it seems unlikely that we will be able to identify the respects in which a picture is intended to resemble other things independently of knowledge of its depictive content. However, ever since H. P. Grice argued that speakers' intentions determine both speakers' meaning and sentence meaning, it has been commonplace in the philosophy of language to

give speakers' intentions a significant role in determining the meanings of their utterances (Grice 1967). By examining the role identification of speakers' intentions plays in linguistic interpretation, we can see that there are several different relations that a respect of resemblance may bear to picture-makers' intentions, each of which enables the resemblance at issue to be identified without prior knowledge of depictive content.

We are frequently able to identify speakers' intentions, in part because they are reflexive: speakers intend their intentions to be recognized (Grice 1967). Because they are intentions that one's intentions be recognized, communicative intentions ensure that speakers cooperate with their audiences by making their intentions as obvious as possible. Such cooperation does not alone suffice to explain audiences' ability to identify speakers' intentions. The proper explanation for this ability is a matter of considerable debate (for different explanations of this ability, see Carston 2002; Grice 1975, 1978; Sperber and Wilson 1986). However, its existence is not in question. We frequently succeed in identifying speakers' intentions from both their communicative behavior and its products.

Our ability to identify the intention-based respects of resemblance that govern depictive content results from this more general ability to identify people's intentions from the products of their communicative behavior. It is not possible to provide a complete answer to the epistemological question of how we interpret pictures without weighing in on the debate about how we identify communicators' intentions. Nevertheless, we have no reason to doubt that our ability to identify intentions from the products of communicative behavior encompasses the ability to identify, by looking at a picture, the respects in which it is intended to resemble its object.

One reason for doubting that viewers can identify which resemblances, among the indefinite number between a picture and other things, its maker intends it to bear is that there are too many candidate resemblances for it to be possible to pick out, from among them, those that were intended to obtain. However, as I have argued (Abell 2009), the ability to interpret some representations uncontroversially requires the ability to distinguish which, among an indefinite number of elements, are picked out by communicators' intentions. To interpret many representations, we must appeal to background information provided by the context in which they were produced. This is necessary, for example, to interpret indexicals such as "I" and "tomorrow." It is also necessary to interpret *conversational implicatures*: nonliteral meanings speakers may communicate by uttering certain words in a specific context. For example, when, in response to my asking someone whether or not she wants to go out for lunch, she replies "I just ate," I must appeal to background information about the frequency with which people eat in order to interpret her as meaning that she does not want to go out for lunch.

Moreover, there are not always independent constraints on the background information relevant to interpretation. While it is part of the literal meaning or character of the indexical "you" both that it should be assigned a reference in context and that the background information relevant to reference assignment concerns the identity of its addressee, there are no such convention-governed constraints on the aspects of context that determine what utterances conversationally implicate. For example, what, if anything, an utterance of "the evening news has just started"

conversationally implicates depends on background information which cannot be identified independently of the context at issue. There is an indefinite amount of background information that is potentially relevant to the interpretation of conversational implicatures, including: information about the preceding conversation, the physical environment in which and the time at which the utterance occurs, and the interlocutors' common knowledge and expectations.

Finally, the contextual information relevant to interpreting implicatures is precisely what the speaker intends to draw one's attention towards. To understand "the evening news has just started" as implicating "hurry up or you'll be late," one must understand the speaker as intentionally drawing one's attention to certain information, such as that the evening news begins at seven, that one has a meeting at eight and that it takes about an hour to travel to the place where the meeting is to be held. The fact that we are able to work out that it is this information to which the speaker intends to draw our attention, rather than any of the indefinite amount of other information embedded in the context at issue, shows that the ubiquity of the resemblance relation is no impediment to our ability to identify intended respects of resemblance.

If this approach is correct, and our general ability to identify communicators' intentions on the basis of their communicative behavior and its products encompasses the ability to identify which, among a variety of resemblances, a picture's maker intended it to bear, we have an account that overcomes the main problems with resemblance accounts while retaining their intuitive appeal. Moreover, it suggests that the epistemological question of how we succeed in identifying picture-makers' intentions is to be answered in the same way as the analogous questions about speakers' intentions in the philosophy of language. Finally, because the account construes depiction as having its origins in general human communicative abilities, it offers us a way of understanding the relationship between depiction and language. While most accounts of depiction, structural accounts especially, emphasize the differences between depiction and language, this account construes them as alike in having their origins in human communicative capacities.

See also Goodman (Chapter 18), Interpretation (Chapter 30), Film (Chapter 53), Photography (Chapter 56), Painting (Chapter 57), Sculpture (Chapter 58).

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Part III

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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36
CRITICISM

Jonathan Gilmore

One sometimes responds to works of art in ways that are idiosyncratic or purely subjective, much as Proust's Swann discovers in old masters' paintings the physiognomies of his personal acquaintances. Other times, one responds to works with the aim of being guided by the artistic merit and meaning they would possess for anyone attending to them under appropriate conditions. When one explains and justifies that work-guided response to others, one engages in a form of criticism. Any example of criticism is likely to have components that depend on its particular vehicle of expression, such as a private conversation, literary review, art-historical monograph, belletristic essay or newspaper listing. However, we will focus on three features most instances of criticism share (and in virtue of which they are recognizable as criticism): the identification of art, its interpretation and its evaluation. It should be noted that each of these aspects has at times been identified with criticism *tout court* and that many contemporary critics deny the centrality of evaluation to their activity. Thus what follows is to some degree an idealization of the practice, one that is meant to capture the rational structure of criticism, but not an account that will perfectly fit how all critics think of what they do.

Identification and interpretation

Any critical appraisal of a work of art must identify (describe, characterize, individuate) it in a way that allows readers to imaginatively represent the work to themselves. At one time, in the literary genre of *ekphrasis*, the work of art that a critic conjured up may not have existed independently of his description. In the more typical case readers of criticism do not have, or have not yet had, an opportunity to engage firsthand with the work of art in question and must content themselves with learning of it through the critic's account. But a reason in principle for why a critic must provide such a nonevaluative identification of the work's features is that there are an indefinite number of ways of describing a work of art and a critic needs to bring the work under at least one description that will sustain, if not justify, the meaning and value she attributes to the work.

Identifying the descriptive features of a work of art – e.g. what a painting depicts, what events occur in a narrative or play, what sort of language, register or rhyme

scheme is used in a collection of poetry, and so on – might be easily achieved for traditional stable genres or media of art. But we can see that sometimes a description of a work must distinguish the features of the work of art from features of the ordinary physical object or material the work is identified with. This is often the case with works of the avant-garde, those from unfamiliar artistic traditions, or those that are not created under a concept of a standard medium. For example, a critic may need to decide whether the atypical thickness of the stretchers employed by a minimalist painter contributes to the meaning of his work (as, say, stressing a painting's identity as an object) or whether inconsistencies in a narrative should be ignored or, instead, recognized as expressive features of the work itself. These sorts of indications do not so much describe or explain the work of art as identify what constitutes it (Danto 1981).

A descriptive operation that goes beyond identifying physical or structural features of a work is the classification of it as an instance of one or more general kinds. These may be genres or media, such as lyric poetry; styles, such as color-field painting; movements, such as punk rock; kinds defined by a common theme, such as suburban anomie; or a common goal, as in muckraking novels. In identifying the relevant kind or kinds to which a work belongs a critic imputes certain functions, points or purposes to the work, i.e. those characteristic of works that belong to such kinds. Or, more tendentiously, to say that a work belongs to a given category may be to commit oneself to explaining the work as arising out of a process in which an artist recognized the relevance of certain regulative constraints and ideals constitutive of that category (Wollheim 1968: 171).

In identifying the category or categories to which a work belongs a critic can point to certain features of the work as being salient elements in its meaning, as describing *The Turn of the Screw* as both a ghost story and psychological novella tells us what features of the work are relevant sources of its meaning and what ends it is designed to achieve. Categorizing a work may also distinguish it from other descriptively similar works, where such similarity obscures differences in meaning. A recognition that, in the context in which a work was created, its language would seem antiquated or its visual form obsolete may prompt a critic to consider whether the work does not belong to its apparent categories but, instead, to others (say, of parody or appropriation) that are parasitic on the apparent ones.

It is unclear where mere description of a work leaves off and interpretation begins. Some aspects of a work, such as the meaning of a symbol or the implicit associations triggered by a term, may have been intelligible as a matter of course to the artist's contemporaries but require extensive forensic analysis akin to interpretation for us to understand that art today. Also, some art forms and individual works of art may call for less interpretation than others, their meaning being as easily recognizable as the meanings of words to a native speaker. However, a notional distinction between the two operations is that description identifies a work in a way that fixes the work, at least for the period the critic engages with it, as an entity to be interpreted. Interpretation presumes the existence of a stable description upon which it depends. A critic may, for example, describe how a naturalistic portrait by the painter Chuck Close is composed of a multitude of the artist's colored fingerprints. This description would then subtend an interpretation of the work, as, perhaps, a witty riposte

by the artist to those who complained that his photorealist style precluded genuine handiwork.

In the process of interpreting a work, a critic's descriptions do not merely serve as clues or guides to discovering a meaning. Rather, through her descriptions a critic explains how the meaning of the work – what it is about, what it expresses, says, shows and so on – is embodied in the work's material and structural makeup. That is, an interpretation of a work assigns meaning to a work in a way that both makes sense of why it has the features it does and shows how those features together convey that meaning. It is a mark of a successful piece of criticism in its non-evaluative dimensions that its descriptions, classifications, appeals to context, and so on, are mutually supporting. For a guiding assumption in the attribution of meaning to a work is that the expressive means a creator chooses are rationally related to her expressive ends.

However, this degree of interdependence among the different aspects of criticism suggests to some theorists that the result of the combined operations of criticism is not constrained by truth so much as consistency. Rather than any given component serving as a fixed constraint on the results of the others, it might be suggested that each is in practice adjusted in turn so that a harmonious conjunction of the results of each distinct operation is achieved. And, as there may be multiple internally consistent sets of the outputs of those operations of criticism, it may be suggested that the choice of which particular set of mutually supporting description, classification, appeal to context, and so on, is put forward as a critical analysis of the work is determined by some evaluative end, e.g. an unacknowledged political or social function that such an analysis serves (Fish 1980). For example, one art historian might describe how an Impressionist painting registers the changing conditions of light, rain and wind in the environment in which it was created, and thus attribute to the painting a heightened realism and immediacy. By contrast, another art historian might note how the work presents only barely discernable indications of such modern technologies as railroad bridges, and thereby interpret the work as a nostalgic and distorting attempt to obscure the contemporary industrialization of the countryside.

It isn't clear if this account captures anything peculiar to the operations that go into the discovery of the meaning of works of art, for a similar epistemic worry can be raised in any context in which empirical description and theoretical explanation stand in terms of potentially mutual revision. In any case, in practice, it is not obvious that just any output of one of the operations of criticism can be adjusted so as to fit with any others (Carroll 2009: 99–101). A critic who sought to classify *Anna Karenina* as a picaresque novel would find it exceedingly difficult to plausibly redescribe its genesis, plot and expressive features (as opposed to ignore them) in ways that fit with that categorization.

Many critics think that the job of criticism is complete once they have provided a description and interpretation of the work: an account of what the work is about, or what it is designed to achieve, and how that meaning or achievement is realized in the particular medium, form, structure and so on that constitutes the work (Danto 2007). For some critics, this purported abstention from evaluation reflects a wariness in attributing objective status to critical evaluations comparable to the more easily defended objectivity of the description and explanation of a work. For others it is

merely a reflection of the division of labor between those curators, theatrical producers, editors and others who perform the role of evaluating works in terms of whether they merit an audience's and critic's attention, and the critic's role in explaining how the work is to be understood such that its merit can be recognized.

Such critics are right in denying that their job is to render solely *verdicts* on a work's artistic value. For, just as our interest in a work's meaning is not in the meaning per se but, rather, in how that meaning is embodied in the work, so our interest in a work's artistic value is typically not an interest in the mere assignment of that value (say, with an eye to ranking works of art). Rather, our interest in the evaluation of a work is an interest in *how* the evaluation is merited by the particular nature of the work, what makes the work "work": what is valuable in the way its form embodies or expresses its meaning, or in the experience that it furnishes. Moreover, even in describing and interpreting a work, a critic must offer at least one kind of normative evaluation, namely, an appraisal of whether or not the, say, representational, expressive or experiential purpose or point of the work is successfully realized. Describing whether and how the features of a work contribute, for example, to the evocation of a certain attitude toward its subject is to evaluate the work in terms of how well it functions.

Most theorists who endorse the central role of evaluation in the critical enterprise see description and interpretation as logically, if not practically, distinct from evaluation. An evaluation is grounded in and justified by the descriptive and interpretative operations performed on a work. However, those who subscribe to a value-maximizing theory of interpretation hold that the practice of interpretation, rather than merely grounding or offering reasons for an evaluation, has itself an ineliminable evaluative dimension.

Evaluation

Broadly speaking, a value-maximizing theory of interpretation holds that it is one of the constitutive norms of interpretation that it aims to heighten a work's artistic value. One version of such a theory enjoins critics to interpret a work against the grain, perhaps ignoring historical constraints on what could have been intended, if that makes possible a rewarding experience of the work, or some other kind of positive appraisal (Barthes 1975). A more modest theory proposes that it is an internal feature of our very engagement with works of art as works of art that we seek in them, or in an experience of them, a maximal degree of artistic value consistent with what we know about the works (Davies 1991: 181–206; Lamarque 2002). Accordingly, other aspects of our engagement with works – such as our practices of interpretation – should be guided by that search for artistic value. It is a reason for preferring one interpretation over another, when each is consistent with the known facts of the work, that the first interpretation lends the work greater artistic value or makes possible a greater artistic experience.

A problem with this approach, however, is that it isn't clear that our aim in engaging with works of art is to maximize such artistic value. We may care about works of art for many reasons other than what makes them artistically valuable,

without those reasons falling outside of a proper engagement with art qua art. A work may command our attention qua art for e.g. what it reveals about a vanished way of life, the character of its creator or the role it played in virtue of its artistic qualities in some significant historical event. In any case, even if there is an interpretative norm of maximizing artistic value, it may apply only to that kind of artistic value that a work merits under a specifically intentional description, i.e. one that characterizes the work as an achievement. Let us now turn to that characterization.

To evaluate a work of art as an achievement is to appraise it not for any artistically valuable feature it may have or experience it may afford, but primarily for those that are the result of a successful performance, one that has the creation of the work with such artistic value as its aim.

That some such characterization of art is an element in critical practice is reflected in the way works of art are regularly described not just as lacking artistic merit but as exhibiting specific failures, e.g. of impact, technique or expression. Such appeal to artistic defects presumes that works can fall short of some standard, broadly conceived, that they are supposed to satisfy. That is, such works are appraised not for just any artistic values they may have but for those values they succeed in realizing under an intentional description, broadly construed (Carroll 2009: 48–83; Sparshott 1982). It would be implausible to maintain that the only features of a work relevant to its appraisal are those that are in accord with the artist's intentions in creating the work, for some room needs to be made for happy accidents and unintended features that enhance the work's artistic value. Still, such an evaluation treats those unintended features as relevant objects of appraisal only under descriptions that reveal how they enhance or detract from the overall (intended) artistic achievement evidenced in the work.

One measure of a work's achievement may be its realization of certain specifically *aesthetic* values. A critic may, for example, call attention to the tedium of a film's action sequences or the tightness of a novel's plot, identifying such response-dependent but objectively possessed features of the works in question as elements that detract from or contribute to the work's artistic value. A long-standing tradition of theorizing about criticism sought to show how ascriptions of such aesthetic features to a work could be in principle justified through a joint appeal to the work's nonaesthetic (merely descriptive) features and to certain principles ("principles of taste") that specify that insofar as a work possesses those nonaesthetic features it possesses those aesthetic features (Beardsley 1962). One such putative principle might be that insofar as a work of sculpture exhibits the proportions prescribed by the "golden ratio" it will appear harmonious. Such principles were elusive, but many philosophers thought that only via appeal to some sort of deductive or inductive argument employing such principles in the attribution of aesthetic features to a work could aesthetic evaluation issue in judgments that are genuinely normative for others.

Other theorists tried to show that deductive or inductive argument was the wrong model to explain how a critic can persuade us that a work has some aesthetic quality. Theorists proposed that critics offer only what purport to be reasons for their aesthetic judgments. What critics do is cause – not rationally persuade – us to perceive the object in question as they do, perhaps through "directions for perceiving" (Isenberg 1949: 336). The problem here is that if critics do not offer reasons for their aesthetic evaluations,

but only the means to elicit experiences similar to theirs, it is not clear how a critic's judgments can have a normative force, one that invites agreement.

One answer is that we can appeal to the regulative notion of an ideal critic making her judgment under ideal conditions, and it is a particular critic's closeness to such an ideal that gives her evaluations such a normative force. That is, we may think of an ideal critic as one who makes her judgments under such favorable conditions as being unbiased, perceptually discriminating, sensitive to the way artists employ the medium of the work in question and so on. The suggestion, drawing on David Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste," is that the standard for an appropriate response to a work is set by the response that an ideal critic would have under such ideal conditions (Hume 1985). Of course, critics do not typically satisfy such ideal conditions and it is not clear how we would know if they did. Indeed, it is a feature of the history of criticism that often a critic's fully vindicated success in appropriately evaluating art of one kind offers no predictive value in determining whether the critic will appropriately evaluate art of another. Ruskin wrote with deep appreciation of Turner's achievement but unaccountably disparaged Whistler's paintings as a pot of paint thrown in the public's face; Clement Greenberg exhibited extraordinary critical acumen in recognizing the achievements of the abstract expressionists when their status in the artworld was uncertain, yet he remained oblivious to the artistic virtues of major landmarks in pop, performance and postmodern art that came later.

However the authority of aesthetic judgment is to be construed, it should be understood as pertaining not to artistic evaluation as a whole but only to one part of such evaluation. This is for two reasons: (i) aesthetic value is only one of many kinds of values that a work may have as a work of art; and (ii) one cannot infer from the presence alone of an aesthetic feature in a work whether the work has, in virtue of that feature, greater or lesser artistic value. Beauty may be an artistic virtue when present in a war memorial but a defect in a depiction of the destruction and suffering the war brought about. If there are no features – aesthetic or descriptive – about which one can make a nontrivial generalization that their possession by any work contributes to its value qua art, how can a description of such features serve to justify a critic's artistic evaluation?

One proposal is that in describing and interpreting a work a critic does not defend her evaluation of it as a good work of art *qua art*. Rather, a critic describes and interprets a work so as to show that it has the good-making features qua art of a particular kind. Here, the proposal is that different kinds, categories or genres of art are each indexed to different points and purposes that are "general enough" to serve as standards in light of which a critic can justify her evaluation (Carroll 2009: 29). In his *Poetics*, perhaps the first treatise based on such genre-relative criticism, Aristotle shows how the study of each type of poetry requires attending to its particular *telos* or aim, and he explains the comparative successes of different tragedies as due in part to how well their features contribute to their genre-specific ends (Aristotle 1984). Like Aristotle, contemporary critics can identify a given work as belonging to a given category or genre of art, and evaluate it with reference to its satisfaction of whatever makes instances of such a genre good qua instances of that genre. An evaluation of a particular detective story can be justified by noting whether it has the good-making features (e.g. a compelling, perhaps flawed, detective; clues that readers can follow) criterial of success in that genre.

Such reference to a work's category or categories in evaluating it is not ad hoc, for identifying a work as belonging to a category – such as still life, sonata, agitprop, romance novel, royal portrait, body art and so on – commits a critic to an explanatory hypothesis about the origins and creation of the work, including what kinds of artistic value the work was created to realize. Of course, any given work may belong to more than one category, and there are higher-level kinds of kinds. Thus, it is possible for a work to be successful as one type of thing but unsuccessful as another or to fall short of satisfying all of its animating aims because they are mutually incompatible.

With kinds of art in which the criterial features are largely stable, a critic's judgment that a work is a good instance of its kind can have a normative hold on us. We ought to agree with her evaluation of the work insofar as it is based on a correct characterization of whether the work exhibits the good-making features of its kind or kinds.

However, one concern with the above schema is that it seems that in many traditions of art it is possible for a work to fail to have the good-making features of a particular genre, style, medium or category that it belongs to and yet still be a good instance of that kind. A work of art may be a successful instance of its genre even as it rejects (modifies, elaborates, challenges and so on) the heretofore good-making characteristics of that kind. That is, the good-making characteristics associated with categories of art are often susceptible to revision through works that are instances of those very categories (Gilmore 2011). An artist may, for example, draw on the resources associated with a category of art without taking on board all the norms of that category. Also, we may find cases in which we want to say that a given work does belong to a given genre but is so significant as art that it "transcends" its category. For example, Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* and the collages of the Russian constructivists are indisputably instances of political propaganda but many critics find that an appeal to any traditional understanding of that categorization obscures, rather than explains, what makes those works compelling (Sontag 1966).

Thus, at any moment in a tradition the existing good-making characteristics of a kind offer *potential* and perhaps practically reliable ways for a particular work of art that is a member of that kind to succeed as a work of art, but those characteristics do not impose limits on what *can* be a good work of art of that kind. Original works of art may have great artistic value according to criteria that are incommensurate with those by which earlier works of the same genre or category were judged.

Many theorists might acknowledge the above point but note that the histories of the arts are composed not of radical breaks but of continuities. A good critic is able to identify the traditional lineages an apparently original work belongs to, and evaluate it in light of the ends of its predecessors. Thus, a critic might recognize that, despite adopting radically new modes of depicting pictorial space, cubist painters never departed from rendering their subjects in customary genres of still life, portraiture and landscape. However, this doesn't solve the problem of how objectively to ground the evaluation of novel works of art in their capacity as novel works – that is, for the original sources of value they offer. We can and do evaluate unprecedented works as in many respects continuous with works earlier in their traditions, but that alone ignores what makes them new. Original artworks are often original precisely in introducing new criteria that, by their lights, they and other artworks ought to be judged (Steinberg 1972).

It may seem that in justifying an appraisal of a work through appeal to a subtending description and interpretation, a critic gives audiences reason to appraise the work in a like manner. But that is too strong a demand to place on the justification a critic offers. Audiences may have aims in engaging with work in light of which they ought not to conform their evaluations to those the critic offers. Rather, we should say that when a critic justifies her appraisal of a work she offers audiences reasons to appraise the work as she does – reasons that could be their own reasons for responding to the work – insofar as they share the ends internal to the practice of criticism.

The above account of criticism emphasizes how its evaluations may be rationally defensible and thus carry a normative claim on agreement from others. However, critical evaluation may also have an inescapably subjective element, in which its hold on others is less secure. We can see this in the two kinds of questions that a critic may ask. The first question is: what is the level of achievement of a work of art relative to the standards of the category or categories to which it belongs? The second question is: is that an achievement that matters? The answer to the first question can demand agreement on rational grounds. The answer to the latter question, which is a question of what kinds of artistic achievements we *should* value, seems essentially contestable in a heterogeneous society – a matter of individual desires and preferences rather than intersubjective norms. We may evaluate any work of art in light of its satisfaction of whatever ends are internal to its kind. But whether such an achievement is a worthy one – one that should be valued – is a question answered with reference not to art's ends but to the ends of art's audiences.

See also Empiricism (Chapter 4), Sibley (Chapter 19), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Taste (Chapter 25), Value of art (Chapter 28), Interpretation (Chapter 30).

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37
ART AND KNOWLEDGE

Eileen John

The relations between art and knowledge are addressed in contemporary philosophical debate in several interesting ways. The question of whether and how art can be a *source* of knowledge is a persistent and central concern; there are also trends that fall under three other headings: art and our capacities as knowers, art as serving cognitive values other than knowledge, and art as a contributor to theory-building. While literature remains the focus of many discussions addressing art and knowledge, other art forms are increasingly considered as well. While this chapter cannot adequately survey all of these developments, I will highlight some of the promising work in this area. Even if one does not hold that art is a source of knowledge, one can recognize art practices as important to practical and theoretical interests in knowledge.

I will use "art" to refer to practices and the products of those practices commonly recognized as art. "Knowledge" is the term that will count as more contentious here, primarily as a way of containing the issues. I begin with a loose specification of knowledge and some of the values embedded in that notion. We need a notion to work with that does not immediately settle questions up for debate. Knowledge is, at a minimum, a reliable, content-bearing resource that is available for use by conscious agents and that meets a success condition appropriate to that content. That it is "content-bearing" is intended to capture the demand that knowledge be *of* something, whether it be knowledge of how to do X or knowledge of a proposition or an experiential property. That it is a resource for conscious agents means that this content can be deliberately drawn on by a being that is aware of itself and its actions. These conditions, broad as they are, still allow us to distinguish knowledge from other resources: though I might say casually that plants know how to photosynthesize or that I know how to digest food or that Google knows I have searched for trains to Ardrossan, those resources are not contents available for an agent in the way that counts for knowledge. The notion of knowledge further builds in normative demands, for content-appropriate success – such as achievement of truth, practical ends and experiential access – and for reliability, as knowledge is contrasted with accidental or lucky success in those achievements. For example, the conception of knowledge as true, justified belief, targeting knowledge of propositions, identifies belief as the status held by an appropriately available resource, and uses truth and justification to identify the demands for success and reliability.

Art as a source of knowledge

Do we gain knowledge from art? If so, how does the learning occur? We can presumably agree that we learn from art about art: we can acquire knowledge of specific artworks and of the history of art by studying artworks. We can also thereby acquire knowledge of facts that are in some way demonstrated by these works (that, at a given time, a particular substance was available or that artists knew about daffodils). The harder question is whether we can learn about reality in a more unrestricted sense from art. This is a controversial matter, perhaps most broadly because art has complex influences and too many possible aims – it does not appear to be a "knowledge-dedicated" domain. We cannot approach art with confidence that it has been constrained and shaped all along by the aim of providing knowledge, as one could argue is the case with philosophy and natural science. Art has instead a bewildering number of intelligible aims, including, in my view, knowledge, but also things like expression, imaginative play, originality, emotional power, formal experimentation, beauty, pleasure, stylistic integrity and moral and political impact, all of which have unclear relations to the pursuit of knowledge. With this diversity in mind, art can seem an unlikely provider of reliable content-bearing resources. Whatever conditions one places on reliability – requiring, say, a basis in causally reliable transmission of information or in logically adequate evidence – the diversity of artistic aims seems to undermine the chances that art will be properly responsible in meeting the demands of knowledge. Granted that art can influence us in ways that turn out to advance our cognitive goals – we can end up with true beliefs through encounters with art – can this influence be an epistemically reliable one rather than a lucky outcome?

This general worry is sometimes formulated by directly contrasting art, or particular art forms, with philosophy and science (Wilson 1983; Stolnitz 1992; Lamarque and Olsen 1994). Aspects of "knowledge-dedicated" practices – articulated deductive or inductive arguments, attempts to define terms clearly and establish agreed standards of relevance and success, encouragement of public debate – are contrasted with aspects of artworks and surrounding practices of appreciation and criticism. With art, such things as ambiguity, postulation of contradictions and impossibilities, lack of clear assertion and explicit argument, and individual or divergent evaluative standards and interpretations seem to be blithely tolerated. Those pressing this contrast typically accompany it with a strong affirmation that art's failure to meet requirements of knowledge-seeking does not count against it as *art* – art practices have different goals and should not be cast as "wannabe" philosophy or science (Lamarque and Olsen 1994; Lamarque 2006; Kivy 2009a; Smith 2006). This signals a further desideratum: it should be clear that in gaining knowledge from art we engage with it as art, rather than learning in some way only incidentally related to its art status.

One response to such worries is to dispute assumptions about the irrelevance of truth-seeking in art. The practices of literary critics, authors and readers have been offered as showing that "success" conditions for knowledge such as the truth of a work's content can be relevant to artistic endeavor and appreciation. Supposing that critical practice and expectations of audiences indicate what is relevant to art qua art, there is thus evidence that it can matter to artistic success that a work not be found to be false or misleading (Rowe 2004; Stecker 2012). This evidence does not directly

address the tougher knowledge problem for art, which is how it could reliably provide such success, but it does suggest there is a burden of proof on those who would say that apparently truth-seeking endeavors are not pursued responsibly.

Another line of response is to consider whether knowledge possessed by an artist can be reliably transmitted to an audience. Can an artwork function as a vehicle of testimony, such that the epistemic authority of the artist is preserved within and made accessible through the artwork? Plato's critique of the artist in *Republic* X, taking artists to lack relevant knowledge, is one of the more unsatisfying arguments in that text. As Gaut notes, standard defeating conditions for accepting testimony – a testifier's insincerity or intention to deceive – do not necessarily apply even to works of fiction, and writers of fiction "are in at least as good a position as the rest of us to reflect on character and value … One comes to think the writer trustworthy in these respects, gives credence to her views, and so treats views new to one as potential insights" (Gaut 2007: 143–44). It seems plausible that commonly, in engaging with art, we carry out informal but steadily cumulative tests of the trustworthiness, intelligence and observational acuity we find to be manifested in an artist's *oeuvre*. When I admire an artist, my admiration is often due in part to believing the artist is in fact in a better position of knowledge than mine (see Carroll 2007). This is again a relatively indirect argument for art as a source of knowledge. Some of the features in play – trustworthiness, intelligence, acuity – are not immediately the terms of *knowledge* transmission. The testing of the artist's authority seems to take place in the microinteractions with a work, in the interplay between what we already accept as known and what we find to be shared, built on, illuminated and challenged in a work. It would be hard to give a clear and general defense of these microinteractions, sufficient to justify accepting testimony of artists as conveyed through works or *oeuvres*, but I think they are part of the story of why we are able to learn from art.

The more direct arguments for art as a source of knowledge involve linking claims about kinds of knowledge and viable routes to given kinds of knowledge to claims about artworks and how we engage with them. I will sketch a few of the linking arguments below, separating out ideas that are often integrated within a single account. But first, abstracting from the details, a "big picture" emerges that does not just work defensively, shoring up art's claim to muster epistemic features characteristically carried by scientific and philosophical inquiry. There is rather a constructive exploration of the complex means by which we come to be competent knowers of things we need to know or value knowing. Here are some of the means cited again and again in discussions of art and knowledge: imaginative extension beyond actual experience, encounters with illustrative objects, emotional response and affiliation, experience from and with awareness of perspective, experience of "minded" making, active and self-conscious reflection and, furthermore, multidimensional integration of all of the above. The big picture is that, as learners, we have extremely sophisticated capacities and background resources to draw upon, and artworks meet us on appropriately sophisticated terms.

The linking arguments concerning imagination cover a lot of philosophical territory, from the role of conceivability in establishing possibility, to the moral relevance of imagining others' perspectives, to the role of mental simulation in psychological understanding. A general assumption is that important forms of knowledge, such as modal, moral and psychological knowledge, are not effectively pursued without

extending our thought imaginatively, beyond what is accessible via ordinary empirical means. Depending on our cognitive goals, it may be relevant to consider counterfactual situations, ideal conditions, actually unrealizable perspectives or situations that we happen not to have experienced; and considering them in imagination can be essential for our best practice. The question of whether imaginative experience meets demands for reliability cannot be neatly resolved. Of course imaginative activity can mislead, distort, be irrelevant or wonderfully askew in relation to quests for knowledge. Nonetheless it seems that imaginative experience can be prompted and guided in ways that provide grounds for accepting its cognitive reliability when those constraints are operative, and artistic imagining can satisfy these constraints.

One point is that, though the fruitfulness of imagination lies largely in the fact that it is not confined to registering actual circumstances, imaginative experience is pervaded by beliefs about the real world. We draw competently on beliefs in judging that what is imagined is or is not similar to things in the actual world (Schellekens 2007: 51–52). It is commonly noted that beliefs that arise from imaginative experience, say through dwelling in imagination on lives portrayed in a novel, undergo testing by relevant memories and accumulated understanding of life (Novitz 1987). If imaginative activity is in these ways deeply entwined with thought about reality, some of the reliability of our ordinary beliefs will carry over into imaginative thought. Davies, drawing parallels between literary fictions and scientific thought experiments, argues that both lead us to form mental models that in turn mobilize unarticulated or unarticulable cognitive resources. We can learn something new from the imagined scenario because we draw on and integrate more tacit prior knowledge than we would if presented, say, with a standard propositional argument. For Davies such thought-experimental results are justified in an "externalist" way, as their success hangs on whether the background we draw on is in fact reliable (Davies 2007: 157–63).

On the other hand, imagination allows us to exercise what might be considered quite manipulative control over what we entertain in thought. Imaginative powers that are appealed to include selection, foregrounding and making salient, simplification, amplification, exaggeration and juxtaposition; we can imaginatively configure the elements of reality in many ways. Though these functions are cognitively risky, they are also extremely basic and indispensable to inquiry – these are imaginative activities that allow for noticing, comparison, isolation of relevant features, clarification of context and of bases for inference, and in general allow for intense, focused identification of and attention to objects of inquiry. Art that summons up imagined scenes and individuals of necessity carries out at least some of these sorts of foregrounding and simplifying functions, to offer discernible and manageable content; and specific genres and modes of art, such as satire and cartoons, highlight particular kinds of "excessive" configurative control.

In considering art's reliability in relation to these risky yet fundamental processes, we need to grant that we bring to art both a willingness to surrender to imaginative configuration *and* finely developed capacities for complex awareness and assessment of the cognitive work involved in these configurations. The point made above, that imaginative activity is permeated by belief, is of course relevant here and contributes to our ability to assess the truth or adequacy of imaginative configurations. Young

argues for the epistemic power of a number of these configuring functions, emphasizing the way in which these experiences have "illustrative" power, putting us in a position to recognize features and their relations (Young 2001: 80–94). Kieran analyzes satirical visual art as indeed exaggerating and limiting depictive content, yet as thereby able to be found illuminating (Kieran 2005: 180–81). The complexity and the "reliability-testing" potential of our responses to art seem tied to the fact that we are commonly experiencing a version of "seeing-in," such that we are aware of the fact that someone has *made* this configuration to have the qualities and priorities it has. We are thus aware of the efforts being made to structure and influence our experience and can take those efforts as calling for assessment. As Maynard says in his study of drawing, drawings "present these visible elements *as drawn* … as the effects of actions guided by the purpose of building a depiction" (Maynard 2005: 224), and many of his examples highlight the informative role played by awareness of informationally filtering, amplifying and aggressively configuring techniques. (See also Gaut 2007: 147–56; Stecker 2012: 20–22.)

The role of emotion in learning from art, while often in practice fully enmeshed with imaginative experience, also brings some different issues into play. Three of these that seem most important are the real involvement of the self, the experience of perspective in emotion and the claims to value within emotion. The first point – that emotional responses to art really happen to real selves – may sound hopelessly insistent on the obvious (at least if you allow me to take "emotional responses" to encompass emotion and quasi-emotion), but it is intended to emphasize that whatever we experience emotionally in response to art is new data that can be informative. One can learn at a minimum that one is capable of reacting this way, and depending on the nature of the response, it may constitute or initiate interesting self-knowledge, as Goldie argued in relation to works of conceptual art that put people in surprising situations (Goldie 2007). The emotional response breaches a barrier of mutual indifference and irrelevance between artwork and audience. While the breach will often be insignificant, it can also be a strong experience in which the self becomes attached to the artwork in some way. In Robinson's account, "When I am emotionally engaged with a novel, I find *my own wants and interests to be at stake*" (Robinson 2005: 117). How these wants and interests can be at stake is a difficult question, but the basic point is that the emotional response can be a basis for recognizing and understanding the sources and meaning of one's attachment.

The potential for interesting self-knowledge through emotional response is tied to the further two points, which concern how much information can be packed into emotional response. Emotions are had from perspectives, from at least partially defined positions from which stimuli appear as salient and potent in a given way, and they very efficiently embed people's evaluative commitments. Robinson and Gaut give extended accounts of how emotional experience in response to art embraces that complexity and thereby contributes to learning. Robinson emphasizes the noncognitive roots of emotion and its nature as a dynamic process; narrative works of art that trigger emotional attachments can lead us through shifting, revisiting processes in which we gradually achieve psychologically and evaluatively complex understanding (Robinson 2005: 154–94). Gaut, while emphasizing the cognitively accessible moral content that can be embedded in emotion, makes a related appeal

to the role of emotionally engaged "ethical journeys" prompted by narrative art. In his examples, artworks teach by leading us to feel the pull of what is salient and valued within ethical perspectives, ultimately putting us in a position to endorse or reject perspectives we have taken up (Gaut 2007: 186–202). The detailed arguments for the reliability of emotional response as a contributor to knowledge are controversial. But the emphasis in both Gaut and Robinson on emotion-laden processes in response to art, and the changes of perspective and revision of judgment that mark those processes, is helpful in suggesting a general strategy of argument. If emotional response to art provides evolving, comparative, engaged experience of perspectives, this seems promising as a model in which the perspectival conceptions and values embedded in emotional response will be tested rather than taken for granted.

Capacities and virtues of knowers

Imaginative and emotional experience also point to a different claim for art's bearing on knowledge: that art trains us in capacities relevant to knowledge, and that it cultivates epistemic and broadly intellectual virtues. On this view, the cognitive value of perceiving, imagining and feeling in experiencing art does not rest solely, perhaps not even primarily, on the acquisition of epistemically "successful" content. The cognitive value may lie in a positive impact on abilities to do such things as perceive delicately, recognize patterns, find contrasts, screen out insignificant detail and be conceptually flexible and open to new information (Lopes 2005: 144–59; Kieran 2005: 138–47). Artworks are often perceptually and intellectually ambitious, making use of "dense and replete" symbol systems, in Goodman's terms, and calling for layered interpretive strategies; they give us good perceptual and intellectual exercise. The claim that art develops intellectual virtues is somewhat stronger, as possessing a virtue requires a stable disposition to exercise one's capacities well, which typically involves being motivated to do so. Lopes argues that the project of appreciating artworks, in which the rewards of perceiving art well can motivate us to be fine perceivers, thus has the power to foster intellectual virtues (Lopes 2005: 147–51).

There are related claims for the role of narrative fiction in training our capacities for specifically moral perception and feeling. Nussbaum argues that some literary works are themselves exemplars of excellent moral perception, as the author manifests fine moral awareness and feeling in portraying a fictional world. These exemplars are models for readers who benefit from the intimate, sustained exposure to what it is like to attend well to moral circumstances: the training helps them to become "readers of their own selves," finely attentive to the morally significant particulars of their own lives (Nussbaum 1990: 39). These ideas have plausibility for any of us who feel we have experienced and been influenced by finer moral perception within art. It is also difficult to support these ideas without help from further arguments. This is partly because the moral capacities will not be properly exercised just by attending well to an artwork, whatever its content, as seems roughly sufficient to support the intellectual virtue claim. It seems the artwork has to "get it right" with respect to what is morally perceived, so this view is not independent of arguments for provision of moral knowledge in art. The harder problem is that, if the goal is not just

morally accurate perception but *morally virtuous perception and feeling*, it is not obvious that experience with art provides, much less reliably provides, something that transformative. Training us to be morally virtuous in perception and feeling potentially calls for deep influence on motivations, commitments and values. I do not rule out the power of art to have such an impact, but it is not an impact we could reasonably *expect* art to have, and it is not likely to be susceptible to theoretical generalization. (See Murdoch 1971: 86–91; Weston 2001; Hamilton 2003; Kieran 2005; Zamir 2007.)

Cognitive value without knowledge

The previous section has already considered one set of ideas that at least partly fall under this heading. I here sketch two other proposals that cast art as cognitively valuable, but that do not require or assume that art provides knowledge. One strand of related claims involves the issue of which questions have urgency or are "alive" for us – which views claim our attention, curiosity and concern. Kivy states that, rather than truth, literary value includes the "expression of live hypotheses" (Kivy 2009b: 102). Gaut traces the value of art partly to "its ability to bring home an understanding of the world through affective means," and I take that locution of "*bringing home* an understanding" to evoke something like "liveness" or force (Gaut 2007: 171). Pocci presents literary texts as prompting "a process of negotiation between reader and text, between what is important for *her* and what is important in *it*" (Pocci 2007: 100). If art helps us find particular ideas and views to be "alive" rather than "dead," or to be experienced as important, this gives art a nonepistemic but valuable role in the fact that we seek out knowledge, argue fiercely, change our minds and generally take understanding and inquiry seriously.

These claims, in evoking the living, urgent quality of ideas and hypotheses, apply most naturally to conditions of questioning, uncertainty and change of belief. There are also appeals to the importance of art in conditions of stable knowledge, where there is no motivation to question accepted beliefs, and yet it is claimed that art can play a valuable cognitive role. Carroll argues that the knowledge we have can be enriched and deepened (Carroll 1998). He is here combatting the "banality" argument against the cognitive value of art, which holds that the truths we may find in art are already well known (Stolnitz 1992). As Zamir says, "the same propositional content can be entertained on different levels," so that it is "less the content being justified, and more the manner of contemplation, support, and acceptance of this content that constitute literature's unique contributions" (Zamir 2007: 16). Gibson, too, is happy to grant that literature operates "on the truths we already possess" (Gibson 2007: 102), since he sees literature as powerful in relation to needs for "acknowledgement" rather than knowledge: acknowledgment "consists in a mind's awareness of what is better described as the *role* a piece of knowledge plays in a form of life" (Gibson 2007: 107). To make the linking argument to literature, and to other narrative art forms, we would have to spell out how art can show knowledge "in action," in people's reasons, desires, choices and experiences, and how it thus shows what is required for acknowledging the role of knowledge in a form of life.

Art and theory-building

This last heading points to a somewhat sprawling group of views and practices that involve, in one way or another, taking art to contribute to the construction of knowledge. This may of course mean that art is a source of knowledge, but the emphasis here is on art's role in getting knowledge "off the ground" in some way, perhaps by setting terms for thought or theorizing or by participating in the presentation of a theory. Depending on how one thinks about conceptual investigation and concept formation, for instance, one might take many claims for art's role in the grasp and revision of concepts as not really about conceptual knowledge, but as about constructive conceptual activity. There are numerous claims that fictional characters "can function as new concepts" which then can be applied to the actual world (Gaut 2007: 173), and that in general imaginative works "create conceptions of things" (Stecker 2012: 14). Goodman says that an artist's picture "may bring out neglected likenesses and differences, force unaccustomed associations, and in some measure remake our world" (Goodman 1976: 33). If the innovative constructions provided by an artwork turn out to suit our needs and to be projectable in future thought and practice, one might say that this provides a retrospective proof that they constituted knowledge. But one might instead want to see this as proving they had a different, not-directly-epistemic constructive value. (See also Gibson 2007: 60–79.)

Finally, let me mention a kind of work that to varying degrees passes over in silence the worries about epistemic reliability that have dominated this discussion. Thinkers sometimes just plunge in and talk about art that inspires and participates in their thinking. Stanley Cavell's work on Shakespeare and Hollywood films is perhaps the most prominent along these lines; I would include in this category work such as Landy's (2004) on Proust, Koethe's (2000) engagement with poets such as John Ashbery and Elizabeth Bishop and a number of essays in Leist and Singer's recent (2010) collection on J. M. Coetzee. These are all works with philosophical goals, and perhaps all contain implicit or partially explicit arguments that their literary sources are philosophically relevant and substantial. However, what I find valuable in them is a kind of easy embrace of their artistic sources as obviously crucial interlocutors. While I find the issues surrounding art's relation to knowledge to be centrally important and mutually illuminating for both sides of the relation, I also want to mark the value of pursuing knowledge in conversation with art whether or not we have confident resolutions of the epistemic issues.

See also Plato (Chapter 1), Aristotle (Chapter 2), Idealism (Chapter 7), Heidegger (Chapter 12), Phenomenology (Chapter 13), Value of art (Chapter 28), Imagination and make-believe (Chapter 31), Art and ethics (Chapter 38), Literature (Chapter 50).

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38
ART AND ETHICS

Berys Gaut

The issues

Questions about the relation of art to ethics run deep in the mainstream of the Western intellectual tradition. Plato in *The Republic* (1961) famously attacked almost all kinds of mimetic art for undermining reason at the expense of the unseemly stimulation of emotion and the advancement of a mere simulacrum of knowledge. A great deal of the subsequent debate about the value of art has been shaped by this seminal attack, so that the issue of the relation of art to ethics has been of recurrent and central interest both to philosophical aesthetics and to literary theory. These concerns are not merely academic: in popular culture worries abound about the ethics of some artworks, condemned because of their violence, explicit sexual content, sexism and so on.

The general issue of the relation of art to ethics admits of several distinct questions. One, most overtly posed in the contemporary popular debate, is this: does exposure to works of art that are ethically suspect (because of their advocacy of violence, sexism, etc.) tend morally to corrupt their audiences? This is essentially a causal, empirical question: we need to find the answer from psychological and sociological research. A second question concerns censorship: does the ethical badness of certain works of art justify their suppression? Some of the points made in the present chapter will be relevant to answering that question, but we will not address it directly: it is chiefly a question in political philosophy and a full answer would have to develop a general theory about freedom of expression. A third question, of great interest to eighteenth-century philosophers, including Hume and Kant, is of whether there are structural parallels between aesthetic and moral judgments: are both kinds of judgments, for instance, objective or relative, are they governed by principles, are they about response-dependent properties and so on? This question will also not be addressed here, since it would lead us away from the core issues that have animated the debate about art and ethics.

What interests us is a question distinct from all of the above. Put most simply, it is this: are the ethical flaws (or merits) of works of art also aesthetic flaws (or merits) in them? Consider Leni Riefenstahl's famous film, *Triumph of the Will*, which is a glowingly enthusiastic account of the 1934 Nuremberg Nazi Party rally. Is the film aesthetically flawed because of its advocacy of Hitler's cause? For it has frequently been denounced as bad art because of its message. Or is its immoral stance simply

an irrelevance to its merit as a work of art? For many regard it as a good, even a great, work of art. Or is it in contrast a great work of art partly because of its immorality? For if great art disturbs and challenges our convictions, then this film could surely qualify as great art.

As the example illustrates, there are three plausible contending answers to our question, each of which we will discuss. They will need refining later, but we can initially roughly characterize them as follows. Autonomism (or aestheticism) holds that ethical flaws or merits of works of art are never aesthetic flaws or merits in them: ethical assessment is irrelevant to aesthetic assessment. The other two views deny this claim of irrelevance, but differ as to how the ethical and aesthetic interrelate. Moralism (or ethicism) holds that works of art are always aesthetically bad in virtue of their ethical flaws. Contextualism (or immoralism) holds that works of art are sometimes aesthetically good in virtue of their ethical flaws and sometimes aesthetically bad in virtue of them.

Before proceeding, we need to clarify what counts as an ethical flaw in an artwork. Ethical flaws should not be understood in terms of the causal powers of works to affect audiences, since assessing this would be relevant chiefly to the causal question. Rather, we should understand flaws in terms of the intrinsic properties of works. We will characterize these flaws thus: a work is ethically flawed just in case it manifests ethically reprehensible attitudes. For instance, *Triumph of the Will* is ethically flawed because of the attitudes it displays of wholehearted approval of Hitler and Nazism. Its causal power to convert some audiences to Nazism is conceptually distinct from this (though of course this power partly rests on its intrinsic ethical flaws).

Autonomism (aestheticism)

An extreme version of autonomism would hold that it makes no sense to morally evaluate works of art, in the same way that it makes no sense to morally evaluate numbers. Now perhaps some kinds of artworks cannot be morally evaluated (this may be true of some music without a text), but as a general claim, there is little to recommend this view. For it is clear that works of art, such as *Triumph of the Will*, can express views which it is proper to evaluate morally, and indeed many, especially narrative, works are constructed so as deliberately to engage their audiences' moral responses (Carroll 1996) and involve an implied or posited author, whose character may be the proper object of moral judgment (Devereaux 2004).

A more moderate and plausible autonomist view is that works of art can be morally evaluated, but that their ethical flaws or merits are never aesthetic flaws or merits in them. The ethical has nothing to do with the aesthetic. When it seems that ethical flaws in works are aesthetically relevant, it is in fact not their ethical badness, but some other features of the expression of these flaws that is relevant. The autonomist Monroe Beardsley discusses Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, some passages of which are anti-Semitic, others of which denounce usury. Both views are false and ethically flawed, but Beardsley holds that only the anti-Semitic passages are aesthetically flawed, because they express anti-Semitism in a cheap and vulgar, insensitive and imperceptive way, whereas the anti-usury views are expressed in a serious tone with rough and strong images and are related to the complexities of things (Beardsley

1981: 427–28). It is the aesthetic manner of expression, in short, that matters aesthetically, not the morality or truth of the attitudes expressed.

Why might one be an autonomist? First, some works of art are ethically incorrect or even deeply repellent, yet they are good or even great works of art; so the ethical dimension cannot be aesthetically relevant (Gass 1993; Posner 1997). Here we could mention again *Triumph of the Will*. Now this kind of case certainly proves something: if one held that moral merits are the *only* kind of aesthetic merits that there are, then one must aesthetically condemn the film. And some writers have held a version of extreme moralism, which would fall to this kind of objection. Tolstoy in *What Is Art?* for instance maintains that the value of art lies in its evocation of a feeling "of joy and of spiritual union with another" (Tolstoy 1930: 227). But this extreme moralism is highly implausible: we praise works for a wide variety of features, such as their beauty, unity, complexity, profundity, etc., features which may have no necessary relation to morality (see also Beardsmore 1971: ch. 2). The moralist should, in short, be a pluralist about aesthetic values; and then she can hold that the film is aesthetically flawed insofar as it is immoral, but that it has many aesthetic merits, such as its unity and complexity, which overall make it a good work of art.

A second reason for being an autonomist derives from an appeal to the aesthetic attitude. The main support for autonomism has come from formalists such as Beardsley and Clive Bell; and formalists generally have held there to be an aesthetic attitude, an attitude we adopt when we assess artworks aesthetically. If this attitude were insensitive to moral considerations, autonomism would be established. Many aestheticians have been skeptical about the existence of an aesthetic attitude; but let us suppose that it exists. Is it insensitive to moral considerations?

The aesthetic attitude is sometimes defined in terms of detachment or disengagement from practical concerns, being an attitude of pure contemplation towards the aesthetic object (the idea derives from the Kantian notion of disinterest). However, even if one accepted this disputable characterization, it would not follow that moral considerations played no role in aesthetic assessment. For I am forced to take a merely contemplative attitude towards historical figures such as Napoleon, since I can do nothing to alter the past; but it does not follow that I cannot make moral assessments of their conduct.

Alternatively, the aesthetic attitude might be defined by reference to those features of works of art at which it is directed. Bell, for instance, holds that aesthetic emotions are directed at the significant form of an artwork and that significant form in the case of the visual arts is merely "a combination of lines and colours" (Bell 1987: 12). Certainly, this would exclude moral considerations from bearing on aesthetic emotions. But even for the visual arts it is an untenable view of what is aesthetically relevant. Our aesthetic interest is directed not just at lines and colors, but also at how the artwork presents a certain subject matter – the ideas and attitudes it manifests toward its subject. Consider Picasso's great antiwar painting *Guernica*. Someone who reacted to it merely as a set of lines and colors in cubist style would be missing out on a central item of aesthetic interest: namely, how Picasso *uses* cubist fragmentation to convey something of the horror of war and fascism. Our aesthetic interest is directed, in part, at the mode of presentation of subject matter; and the way it is presented can and often does manifest ethical attitudes.

There is a general difficulty that faces the autonomist: our aesthetic practices are laden with ethical evaluations. We often aesthetically praise works for their ethical characteristics – for their compassion, moral insight, maturity, sensitivity and so on – and think them less good works for their gross insensitivity, sadism and cruelty. Indeed, as the literary critic Wayne Booth has noted, up to the end of the nineteenth century the legitimacy of ethical criticism of art was mainly taken as a given (Booth 1988). Though the formalist high point of the mid-twentieth century saw ethical criticism go into relative decline, the recent burgeoning of feminist and radical literary criticism represents a strong renewal of the ethical tradition. Further, many authors exhibit ethical intentions in their writings; and it would be heroically implausible to hold that this had nothing to do with the aesthetic value of their works. Imagine trying to ignore the ethical evaluations in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* while aesthetically evaluating only its other features: to do this is simply impossible, since her ethical stance pervades the work's narrative structure, its descriptions of characters and situations, its style, its authorial tone and persona. One cannot set aside Eliot's ethical stance while keeping anything remotely resembling her novel before one's view.

Contextualism (immoralism)

Contextualism holds that the ethical flaws of works are sometimes aesthetic merits in them. The position is often called "immoralism" (Kieran 2003), but this name might suggest that moral defects are always held to be aesthetic merits, whereas the view is that they are sometimes aesthetic defects and sometimes aesthetic merits, depending on the artistic context in which they occur.

Contextualists note that art is sometimes praised for its transgressive or subversive qualities; so if art sometimes subverts our moral values, could it not be *ipso facto* good? Something like this view is defended by Lawrence Hyman. Hyman claims that there is often a tension or conflict between our aesthetic and ethical responses to works: a work's aesthetic power can act to undermine our moral values and the moral resistance we feel can enhance the work's aesthetic worth. Discussing passages in *King Lear* where Lear condones adultery by equating human and animal sexuality, and cruelly jokes at the expense of blind Gloucester, Hyman remarks that "the dramatic effect requires our moral disapproval" (Hyman 1984: 154).

However, though the immorality of Lear's attitudes is *represented* in the play, it does not follow that these attitudes are *shared* by the play itself (in fact, given the play's account of Lear's gradual achievement of moral wisdom, clearly they are not). Ethically good works can represent immoral characters and their attitudes without the works sharing those attitudes. But it is the attitudes manifested in a work that are relevant to the dispute between moralists and contextualists. Moreover, we need to distinguish two senses in which a work can be transgressive. It might ask us to *question* some of our moral attitudes; but that hardly makes the work ethically flawed: moral attitudes can be questioned without immoral attitudes being endorsed (moral philosophers frequently do this, after all). If on the other hand immoral attitudes are actually *embraced* by a work, then we can plausibly deny that this is an aesthetic merit: de Sade's enthusiastic endorsement of sexual torture gives one reason to be revolted, not aesthetically enraptured.

A second argument for contextualism appeals not to transgression but to inseparability. The moralist holds, roughly, that a moral flaw in a work is an aesthetic flaw: so it seems moralists should claim that were the moral flaw removed, this would aesthetically improve the work. But, the objection goes, this is clearly false. Some aesthetically good features of a work may depend on its moral flaws: for instance, Riefenstahl's film is great not just because of the formal beauty of its images, but also because of the continuity of its political and aesthetic ideas, the unity of its form and content. "The moral defects of the film are not aesthetic blemishes, because they are inseparable from the work's aesthetic value" (Jacobson 1997: 192–93).

One can raise doubts about the treatment of this particular example (for a moralist appraisal of the film, see Devereaux 1998). But let us consider the more general point made. Moralists may sometimes seem to suppose that removing a moral flaw in a work would invariably lead to a better work, but there is no need for them to make so strong a claim. Consider the notion of a pro tanto principle: this holds that something is good *insofar as* it possesses a certain property. Morality is often thought to involve such principles: an act is morally good insofar as it is an act of kindness, an act is morally bad insofar as it is a lie. Whether it is *all things considered* morally good can be determined only by looking at details of the particular situation. Suppose my aged aunt proudly shows me her new hat, a monstrous confection of lace and silk, which sits on her head like a sagging blancmange. "Do you like it?" she wants to know. I cannot choose silence: it would be all too clear what I thought, so I decide to lie: "it's great." My action is good insofar as it is kind, bad insofar as it is a lie. Let us suppose that in this particular case lying is less bad than being unkind, so all things considered, it is good to say that I like her hat.

Now if I decided instead not to lie to my aunt, my action would be improved in respect of its truthfulness: but it would be all things considered a worse action. Pro tanto principles are indeed general: it is always the case that an act is bad insofar as it is a lie. But it does not follow that improving an act *in a particular respect* (by telling the truth) would *all things considered* improve it. For by improving it in this respect, I might remove some other good-making feature it possesses (such as its being kind). So there may be general pro tanto principles, but there need be no all-things-considered principles. And this is because certain properties of actions are interactive. I cannot in this instance be kind, except at the expense of lying; the presence of truthfulness here undermines the presence of kindness. But note that my action of telling my aunt that I like her hat is still morally flawed.

The moralist about aesthetics can appeal to pro tanto aesthetic principles: notably, that a work is aesthetically bad *insofar as* it is ethically flawed. But she need not hold that removing that ethical flaw must *all things considered* aesthetically improve the work. For removing the ethical flaw might remove some other good aesthetic qualities that depend on that flaw (for instance the unity of a systematically immoral work might be reduced if its morality is improved), just as, in the case of my aunt, removing the flaw in respect of truthfulness would all things considered make it a worse action. And again one must look at details of the particular situation to determine what will result all things considered. For aesthetic properties are interactive, in the same way that moral properties are.

So the moralist can adopt a pro tanto principle that the work is aesthetically bad insofar as it is ethically flawed, but should not embrace the all-things-considered principle that a work is always aesthetically improved when its morality is improved: that is too strong. The moralist can consistently agree with the contextualist that removing a moral flaw might not make a work all things considered aesthetically better; but she will maintain, nevertheless, that insofar as a work is immoral, it is aesthetically flawed.

A third argument for contextualism draws on aesthetic cognitivism. This is the doctrine that works are aesthetically good by virtue of teaching us something: cognitive merits of works are, under certain conditions, aesthetic merits. Cognitivists have tended to favor moralism, but some contextualists argue that cognitivism supports their position. Matthew Kieran, for instance, holds that "imaginatively experiencing morally defective cognitive-affective responses and attitudes in ways that are morally problematic can deepen one's understanding and appreciation" (Kieran 2003: 72). For instance, we can come to understand how bullying, and more generally evil acts, can be enjoyed and be seductive by reading a story that invites us to take up the bully's perspective, to want the bullying to succeed and so to respond in ways that are immoral (Kieran 2003: 68–69; see also 2010: esp. 696–98).

However, given that the story implicitly advocates that bullying is morally good, a cognitivist should hold that this is an aesthetic flaw in the work, since the claim that bullying is morally good is false. The story also implies the distinct claim that we can easily be seduced into finding bullying attractive. That is true; but it is not a claim that requires an immoral attitude in the work, for the point could be insisted on by someone who is strongly opposed to bullying. So the cognitivist should hold that, when the claims are aesthetically relevant, the work's claim that bullying is good (which makes the work immoral) is an aesthetic demerit in it, since it is false; and the work's claim that we can easily enjoy bullying (which is true, but does not evince an immoral attitude) is an aesthetic merit. Thus when we distinguish the two claims the work is making, we can see that its correct cognitivist evaluation supports moralism, not contextualism. A cognitivist cannot consistently hold that a work's approval of evil is an aesthetic merit, since it cannot be a cognitive merit, for the simple reason that it is false to say that one ought to approve of evil.

One could teach the truth that we can easily be seduced into enjoying bullying, without claiming that bullying is good; and a cognitivist should find this kind of story better. What, though, if the contextualist held that stories of the immoral kind are generally more effective at teaching psychological truths than are morally unproblematic stories? One should properly be skeptical about this: teaching aims at the communication of knowledge and propositional knowledge must by definition be true, so such teaching is necessarily only partially successful. But even if the contextualist were correct here, all it would show is that, again, we have a conflict between pro tanto principles. In the case of my aunt, I had to lie in order to be kind, but nevertheless lying is wrong. Likewise, on this scenario I had to advocate falsehoods about the goodness of bullying in order to advance truths about the seductiveness of bullying, but nevertheless advocating falsehoods is a cognitive demerit, and according to the cognitivist an aesthetic demerit too. (For further critical discussion of contextualism, see Harold 2008 and Stecker 2008.)

Moralism (ethicism)

Contemporary defenders of moralism have rejected Tolstoy's extreme moralism; and to make this clear, they have sometimes termed their positions "moderate moralism" (Carroll 1996) or "ethicism" (Gaut 1998). We have seen that this kind of view is best formulated using a pro tanto principle. However, ethicism as roughly characterized up to now needs refining; for the ethicist should not allow any ethical flaw at all to count as an aesthetic flaw. Consider a novel that simply added a list of morally dubious claims to its final chapter ("kindness is a sign of weakness," "lying is a good thing"): the novel would be ethically flawed, but we might well think that it was not aesthetically flawed (or if it were, it would be because of the irrelevance of this list to what went on in the novel). So the ethicist should hold that ethical flaws are only sometimes aesthetically relevant. Ethicism then would hold that a work of art is always aesthetically flawed insofar as it possesses an ethical flaw that is aesthetically relevant. One might hope to discover a general condition for aesthetic relevance, but it is not essential to do so to argue successfully for ethicism.

There are two main arguments for ethicism. (Other arguments have been based on befriending an author, see Booth 1988; and on moral beauty, see Gaut 2007: ch. 6.) The first, cognitivist, argument is the more popular (Beardsmore 1971, 1973; Carroll 1998, 2002; Eaton 2001; Nussbaum 1990). It appeals to the fact that works of art can teach us and what they can teach us includes moral truths and how we ought morally to feel. Strong versions of the view even hold that *only* certain great works of literature, such as the novels of Henry James, can teach us very fine-grained moral truths (Nussbaum 1990). That claim is implausible: the world is full of morally sensitive people who are happily innocent of the works of Henry James and his ilk. But a more modest view holds that art is one of the sources of moral knowledge. Many literary works, including those of James, Dostoevsky and Shakespeare, convey important moral insights.

To make this cognitivist argument work it is not enough to show that art can educate us morally. One also has to show that its capacity to teach us is an aesthetic merit in it. An artwork can teach us a great deal about the world without this having anything to do with its artistic merit: photographs of Victorian Britain are an important source of information about that society, but that does not make them better as artworks. Historical value is not the same as artistic value. So the cognitivist must show that when art teaches us morally this is at least sometimes an aesthetic merit in it. For instance, R. W. Beardsmore argues that *what* art teaches us is essentially connected with *how* it teaches us. In Donne's beautiful comparison of parted lovers to a pair of compasses, what is conveyed about love is essentially connected with the particular metaphor and words by which it is conveyed (Beardsmore 1971: 59). If this is correct, then at least in some cases cognitive content (including moral content) is essentially connected with the aesthetic features of the vehicle that carries that content. So the aesthetic relevance of cognition in such cases is established. And in general, it is plausible that when cognitive insights are conveyed in rich and detailed descriptions of characters and situations, they achieve aesthetic relevance. The aesthetic relevance of cognitive assessment is also supported by the use of critical vocabulary, such as "profound," "insightful" and "wise," which has a cognitive dimension (Gaut 2007: chs 7 and 8).

A second argument for ethicism, the merited response argument, goes back in one version to Hume. Hume is an ethicist about art, but not it seems a cognitivist. He writes that

> where vicious manners are described, without being marked with the proper characters of blame and disapprobation; this must be allowed to disfigure the poem and to be a real deformity. I cannot, nor is it proper I should, enter into such sentiments.
>
> (Hume 1907: 282)

The core of this argument rests on an appeal to affective responses ("sentiments") and Hume claims that we cannot enter into the immoral sentiments that the work asks us to feel. This is (unhappily) false, for an evil person might be able to enter into such sentiments with enthusiasm, and applied to this case the argument might conclude in establishing contextualism. However, Hume also adds, "nor is it proper that I should"; and that ought to be the core claim: the responses must be *merited*, not simply the ones we actually have.

A contemporary version of the argument, which highlights the role of merited responses, proceeds roughly as follows. As noted in the first section, a work is intrinsically ethically flawed just in case it manifests ethically reprehensible attitudes. When works manifest attitudes, they do so by prescribing or inviting their audiences to have certain responses: de Sade's *Juliette* manifests its sadistic attitudes by inviting readers to respond erotically toward and be amused by the scenes of sexual torture it depicts. Responses that works prescribe are not always merited: for instance, a horror film invites us to be horrified by the events it recounts, but if those events are ineptly presented, they may merit amusement, not horror. Now one ground for holding a response to be unmerited is that it is unethical: for instance, sexual torture is not erotic and amusing, it is plain evil and does not merit amusement or an erotic response. If an artwork prescribes responses that it does not merit, then that is a failure in the work. And it is an *aesthetic* failure in the work, given the aesthetic importance of these prescribed responses: for instance, tragedies that do not merit fear and pity, horror films that do not merit horror, comedies that do not merit amusement and so on, all fail aesthetically. So putting together these points, we can conclude that ethical flaws manifested in prescribed responses are in such circumstances aesthetic flaws in a work (Gaut 1998, and for the full version of the argument see 2007: 229–33; a related argument is in Carroll 1996).

An influential objection to this argument holds that it moves illicitly from a premise about it being wrong to respond in a certain way (for instance, being amused), to holding that the response is not warranted: that the object lacks the relevant evaluative property (being funny). While it may be wrong to be amused by a vicious joke, it does not follow that the joke is not funny (Jacobson 1997, 2006).

However, the argument does not rest on this illicit transition: the claim to which the ethicist appeals is not simply that it would be wrong to be amused, but that jokes insofar as they are vicious are not funny (or are flawed in their humor). This is a common criticism of sexist or racist jokes. Besides the amusing, many other response-dependent evaluative properties are sensitive to moral considerations; and

this is the crucial claim to which the ethicist appeals. Other examples concern whether pity is merited (warranted), which partly depends on whether the person suffering does not deserve to suffer and so is genuinely pitiable (a justly imprisoned murderer may not deserve pity). More generally, whether pleasure is merited, that is, whether something is pleasurable, partly depends on moral considerations: someone torturing another may enjoy doing so, but what he is doing is not pleasurable, for he ought not to be taking pleasure in it. Notions such as the amusing, the pitiable and the pleasurable are normative ones and the norms that govern them are, in part, ethical ones.

A second objection is that some evaluative properties are indeed dependent on moral properties, but in a way that undermines ethicism: for instance, are not certain jokes funny precisely *because* they are cruel (Jacobson 1997: 171–72)? Most jokes are not works of art; but one could make a similar point about humor in art; indeed, does not the entire genre of satire rest on reprehensible attitudes?

However, satire as a genre need not evince immoral attitudes: satire ridicules, but some ridicule is well deserved and satirists are often moralists, excoriating what they regard as the moral failings of their targets. More generally, the claim that something can be funny because it is vicious sits badly with the fact, just noted, that many people hold that racist, sexist or more generally vicious jokes are not funny. The ethicist can account for that fact and moreover is not committed to a grim puritanism about humor, which holds that vicious jokes are never funny: being a pluralist about value, the ethicist can hold that these jokes are flawed in their humor (because of their viciousness), but that they may have other features that support their humor (they may be very clever, for instance). Finally, one should distinguish between whether a work merely invites us to *imagine* adopting an immoral attitude and whether it *actually* adopts that attitude: the former implies no moral failing, while the latter does. A comedy such as the film *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, which is sometimes thought of as a work that is funny because cruel, clearly does not actually endorse the attitude of finding murder fun: it asks us to imagine adopting that attitude and viewing the world from that perspective. (See Gaut 2007: 234–51, for replies to objections to the merited response argument.)

As we have seen, the debate about the relation of art to ethics has been running since Plato. It is one of the most discussed issues in contemporary aesthetics, with prominent defenders of autonomism, contextualism and ethicism, and each position has been defended in a variety of forms, and supported or criticized on a variety of grounds. Given the longevity of the discussion and its current lively nature, it seems unlikely that this fascinating debate will end any time soon.

See also Plato (Chapter 1), Aristotle (Chapter 2), Empiricism (Chapter 4), Kant (Chapter 5), Nietzsche (Chapter 8), Formalism (Chapter 9), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Value of art (Chapter 28), Art and knowledge (Chapter 37), Humor (Chapter 41).

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39
ART, EXPRESSION AND EMOTION

Derek Matravers

The primary use of such terms as "sadness" and "joy" is to refer to the mental states of people. In such cases, the claim that someone is sad is equivalent to the claim that they feel sad. However, our use of emotion terms is broader than this; a funeral is a sad occasion, a wedding is a happy event. In such cases, a justification can be given for the use of the word. For example, it is part of what is meant by "sadness" that events such as funerals are an appropriate object for such emotions and the epithet is transferred. Sometimes in criticism (I shall follow practice and use this term broadly) a similar justification can be given; it explains, for example, why the death of Little Nell is sad. On other occasions such a justification is not available. A poem can express sadness without representing a sad state of affairs. More obviously, to take a medium that is not representational, a piece of music can be sad. What we need is some way of making sense of these uses of the emotion terms.

Expression theories

An obvious and appealing solution is to take the words to be referring to the mental state of the artist. The artist feels an emotion that he or she transmits to the audience by way of the work. This position, generally known as "the expression theory," found a vigorous exponent in Tolstoy:

> Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them.
>
> (Tolstoy 1969: 123)

There are two separate claims that are part of this position:

(1) At the time of creation, the artist was in mental state *F*.
(2) In virtue of possessing the property *P*, the work expresses *F*.

The classic expression theory claims that the two are linked in virtue of the fact that the artist expresses *F* by causing the work to possess *P*. Opposition to the expression theory stems from the claim that for this to be true, *P* must be the vehicle for the artist's expression. How is this to be explained? It cannot be simply that the artist caused *P* when he was feeling *F*; not everything we do when we are sad expresses sadness. It must be some fact about *P*. However, the account of how *P* itself can express the artist's emotion seems to be the account of the nature of expression; the causal account of how *P* came into existence is no longer relevant. It follows from the logical independence of cause and effect that it would be fallacious to infer the nature of *P* from the nature of its causes (the so-called "genetic fallacy").

In reply, expression theorists have attempted to claim that (1) and (2) stand not only in causal, but also in a logical relation. A consideration thought to favor this is that the relevant descriptions of a work of art also refer to the intentional actions that brought them into existence. Works *present* ideas, *view* scenes, *observe* events, for example. Guy Sircello has dubbed these "artistic acts" (Sircello 1987 [1972]: 406). He argues that

> Precisely in virtue of their artistic acts and of the similarity they bear to common kinds of expressions, works of art may serve as expressions of those feelings, emotions, attitudes, moods and/or personal characteristics of their creators which are designated by the anthropomorphic predicates applicable to the art works themselves.
>
> (Sircello 1987 [1972]: 412)

Sircello's view is that the manifestations of emotion are logically connected to the inner state that caused it. To see a smile is not to see an appearance and infer a happy state of mind, but to see the happy state of mind in the face itself. The "act" and the "thing" are inseparable (Sircello 1987 [1972]: 409).

It is plausible that there are logical connections between the nature of mental states and their outward manifestations. Is this enough to establish that, on any particular occasion in which there is an outward manifestation, there is a mental state being expressed? No, because expressive appearances do not necessarily have mental states for their causes. A sad face might be caused by slicing onions, in which case there is no relevant mental state to which the appearance is connected. Just as we can discuss what makes a face sad without being committed to the existence of a prior mental state, the appearance in art of emotion can be discussed and analyzed as an appearance, independently of the state (if any) which caused it. As Alan Tormey put it, "the particular mistake … arises from assuming that the existence of expressive qualities in a work of art implies a prior act of expression" (Tormey 1987 [1971]: 425).

Can the actual artist be removed from the story without any loss to criticism, as Tormey's view implies? In particular, are the intentions of the artist necessary to establish a standard of correctness? That they are is part of the account of expression put forward by Richard Wollheim. The account, devoid of some of its complexity, is as follows. Human beings have the capacity to "project" their internal states on to natural objects, a capacity that is rooted deep in our psychology. The objects on to which we project state *F* (for example) are those which "correspond" to *F*. A rocky

landscape with a solitary tree, for instance, might correspond to melancholy. This projection results in the person viewing the object as being "of a piece" with their state; the projected properties are genuinely seen in the object. At a later stage of development, human beings are able to see objects as those on which "we might have or could have" projected the state (Wollheim 1991: 154). Expression in art is an extension of this. Here we see a marked surface as being "of a piece" with our mental state. The property of the work that enables us to do this is one that has been put there intentionally by the artist. Hence, in the case of art, "there is now imposed upon expressive perception a standard of correctness and incorrectness" (Wollheim 1987: 85).

Malcolm Budd has argued that Wollheim's account inherits a problem similar to that which dogged Sircello's account (Budd 2001). Is projection part of the content of the perceived state or is it an element in the causation that leads to our being in that state? If projection were part of the state then not only would anyone familiar with expression be familiar with projection but the perception of expression would require, in each and every case, an instance of projection by the spectator. Neither of these claims seems plausible. If projection is only an element in the causation it is not constitutive of expression; it throws no light on the nature of the experience of expression. Wollheim suggested the problem could be solved by claiming that the experiences "intimate their own actual history," although the nature of that intimation remains unclear (Wollheim 1991: 153).

The semantic theory

Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art* is an attempt to explain the central features of art within a theory of symbols (Goodman 1976). *A* expresses *E*, according to Goodman, if one, *A* possesses *E* metaphorically, and two, *A* exemplifies *E* (Goodman 1976: 95). Goodman is a nominalist; he does not believe that explanations should invoke properties but rather the extension of terms (although he does use the term "property" as shorthand; something I will also do here). Hence, for *A* to possess *E* metaphorically is for *A* to fall within the extension of *E* used as a metaphor. For example, a picture may possess "square" literally, and "sad" metaphorically. An object exemplifies a predicate or property if it refers to it. For example, a tailor's swatch possesses many properties; it has a color, size and absolute value. However, it only refers to the first of these; exemplification is possession plus reference (ibid.: 53). Hence, our picture not only is sad, it exemplifies sadness.

Both parts of Goodman's definition have been criticized (Davies 1994: 137–50; Matravers 1998: 104–8). What is it for *A* to fall within the extension of *E* used as a metaphor? Goodman says that "in metaphor … a term with an extension established by habit is applied elsewhere under the influence of that habit; there is both a departure from and deference to precedent" (Goodman 1976: 71). It is an open question whether metaphor can be defined in terms of the nature of the use of a term in a way that distinguishes a metaphorical use from other possibilities, such as a novel use or a slip of the tongue. What seems to be needed is an account in terms of the nature of the picture: what is it about the picture that justifies the application

of "sad" to it, albeit metaphorically? Goodman shifts between two replies. The first is to reject resolutely the need for justification: "the predicate must apply to all the things it must apply to" (Goodman 1976: 78). This will be unsatisfactory to anyone but a convinced nominalist. The other is to take metaphorical possession of a property not as a linguistic fact, but as a *way* an object might possess a property. However, this is not only apparently incompatible with nominalism, but, without further explication, is wholly mysterious.

An air of mystery also surrounds the claim that *A* exemplifies *E*. The problem is to distinguish between those properties an object exemplifies, as opposed to those it merely possesses. Recalling the tailor's swatch, one might think it is best done by reference to those properties for which the object is a sample. However, this has no obvious place in an account of expression. This was not a problem to which Goodman had any satisfactory solution.

Contemporary theories

I referred above to Alan Tormey's claim that expressive qualities are logically independent of acts of expression. That is, any account should respect the fact that expression is experienced as being a quality of the work itself (for classic accounts of this, see Bouwsma 1954; Beardsley 1981: 325–32). Such qualities can be analyzed independently of the state of mind of their creator and are not logically distinct from qualities such as grace, unity or balance. Expressive qualities, like those other qualities, are perceived as part of the form of works of art. I have, so far, considered accounts that are supposed to apply generally across the arts. However, contemporary accounts focus on the expressive qualities of music. I shall consider these, but it must not be assumed that these accounts generalize to the other art forms (Levinson 1996: 124).

The contemporary theories I shall consider fall under three broad headings: those that rely on the experience of resemblance, those that rely on an act of imagination, and those that rely on aroused feelings. I shall consider each in turn.

The starting point for theories of experienced resemblance is the listeners' experience of expression. This is because the aim is to provide a *constitutive* account of expression; and what such theorists take expression to consist in is for the listener to hear the music a certain way. The central claim is that to experience music as expressing emotion is to experience the music as resembling the experience of emotion. The music appears to us a certain way, and the way it appears is similar to the appearance worn by people expressing their emotion. Stephen Davies (the most prominent proponent of this theory) claims that there are certain type appearances which are linked to the emotions although not necessarily caused by a felt emotion. For example, some people have a sad face: that is, a face that looks as if it is expressing sadness, even if it is not. This type appearance can be tokened in places where talk of such inner states is not appropriate. For example, we can say of a St Bernard dog that it has "a sad face." Davies's claim is that this appearance can be tokened in certain pieces of music: when this happens, we have an instance of "sad music." We perceive this directly, as we do the sadness on the face of the St Bernard.

Davies says, "the expressiveness of music depends mainly on a resemblance we perceive between the dynamic character of music and human movement, gait, bearing, or carriage" (Davies 1994: 229). This is also one way of interpreting the view put forward by Peter Kivy (Kivy 1989). Also interesting is a weaker form of the theory that has also been put forward by Dominic Lopes with respect to expression in the visual arts (Lopes 2005: 49–90).

Clearly, there are many things (including pieces of music) that are candidates for being experienced as tokening this appearance. In any particular case, whether we actually do so experience it is a matter for psychology (Davies 1994: 228). There are two places, however, where Davies's theory looks vulnerable. The first is the extent to which explanation in terms of cross-modal type appearances is illuminating. There is a type of taste that is the taste of strawberries which can be tokened in other things I can taste (for example, milkshakes and ice cream), but there is nothing that is the sight or sound of the taste of strawberries. What sense can we attach to experiencing the sound of music as tokening a type, where that type is specified in terms of how something looks? Davies's reply to this is that there are certain properties – particularly those of movement – that can be tokened either in sight or in sound: both people and music can move slowly. However, such a reply faces an obvious problem: to be a literal case of movement, there must be a continuous existent that changes location over time. This is true in the case of people moving but false in the case of our experience of music. The property underpinning the resemblance claim is not the same in both cases: we are comparing literal movement to metaphorical movement. Davies replies by denying that the literal sense of "movement" is restricted to the physical paradigm. He points out that movement vocabulary is not only universal in describing music, but also in many other nonmusical mundane scenarios: stock-exchange indices shift up and down, and political parties lurch to the right (Davies 1994: 230–38). The second problem is that the characterization of the appearance is too weak; we can experience objects as resembling the movement properties characteristic of expressive people, without experiencing those objects as expressive. In response to this, Davies has argued that we do not experience the music as resembling merely "bodily or mechanical movements," but rather as resembling goal-directed human actions "because humanly presented emotion-characteristics, such as those revealed in a person's gait or bearing without regard to how they feel, are more readily observed in actions than in mere movements" (Davies 1999: 283). A perceived resemblance to action would be experienced as expressive when a perceived resemblance to movement would not. Nonetheless, some remain skeptical. Jerrold Levinson argues that the change from merely experiencing a resemblance to experiencing the music as expressive is a marked change in phenomenology; a change, indeed, that can only be captured by Levinson's own account (Levinson 2005: 197).

Levinson's account falls under the second heading I shall consider: that is, Levinson believes that the experience of expression is some kind of imagined content. When we say "we experience the music as the expression of sadness" what we mean is something akin to "we experience the music as being the externalization of sadness by someone." That is, we experience the music as the expression of emotion. Clearly we cannot do this literally as we do not experience instrumental music as sounding

anything like the sounds associated with the expression of human emotion. Although our experience of the music is not the experience of the expression of emotion, we can *imagine* of the music that it is the expression of emotion. That is, we imagine the music is the externalization of some inner psychological state by some indefinite fictional agent, whose only role is to be that of which we hear the music as an externalization (Levinson calls this agent "the persona"). More formally, Levinson's account is as follows:

> A passage of music P is expressive of an emotion E if and only if P, in context, is readily heard, by a listener experienced in the genre in question, as an expression of E … To hear music as such and such is, perhaps, to imagine *that* the music is such and such, and more specifically, to imagine *of* the music, *as* you are hearing it, that it is such and such.
>
> (Levinson 2005: 193–95)

Levinson's theory keeps musical expression "parallel or closely analogous to expression in its most literal sense," even if in the musical case the entity doing the expressing is fictional (Levinson 1996: 91). In this it differs from another account that relies on the imagination: that of Kendall Walton.

> I propose that, although music does not in general call for imaginative hearing or imaginative perceiving, it often does call for imaginative *introspecting*. We mentioned the possibility that music is expressive by virtue of imitating behavioural expressions of feeling. Sometimes this is so, and sometimes a passage imitates or portrays vocal expressions of feelings. When it does, listeners probably imagine (not necessarily consciously and certainly not deliberately) themselves hearing someone's vocal expressions. But in other cases they may instead imagine themselves introspecting, being aware of, their own feelings.
>
> (Walton 1988: 359)

In a later paper, he elucidates this:

> Anguished or agitated or exuberant music not only induces one to imagine feeling anguished or agitated or exuberant, it also induces one to imagine of one's auditory experience that *it* is an experience of anguish or agitation or exuberance.
>
> (Walton 1994: 55)

This imaginative endeavor is, for Walton, constitutive of the work sounding a certain way to us.

Levinson has criticized Walton's account as not being true to our experience of expression; as construing our attention as being directed inward on ourselves, rather than directed outward towards the music and its emotional significance (Levinson 1996: 95). While there certainly are differences between the two accounts, one might also have general worries about the use of the imagination in solving the problem.

One worry is that it looks as if the accounts simply take the description of the experience we find problematic (we experience the music as the expression of emotion), put it within the scope of the imagination and maintain it is not problematic. This suspicion is lent force by the fact that there is no robust background account of the imagination to which people such as Levinson and Walton can appeal that will give an independent grasp of its scope and explanatory power. However, they have a number of considerations on their side. First, we are not starting from nothing; we begin with an experience with which we are all familiar. If the description provided by an account of the experience of expressive music appears accurate to people familiar with the experience, that is a point in its favor. Second, considerations can be brought forward to mitigate the concerns that we do not fully understand the content of the imagined state. Levinson says that musical expressing is music "heard as doing something like what humans do in manifesting emotions … ones analogous to human gesturing and vocalizing and expressive movement, in all its forms, including dancing, but going beyond them" (Levinson 1996: 115). Walton points to various similarities between sounds and our feelings, such as that we "reify or objectify sounds"; we think of them as having an existence in our experience rather than (like sights) existing "out there" (Walton 1994: 57). Such similarities make it easier for us to accept that we can imagine of our experience of one that it is an experience of another.

Worries remain, however. The accounts attempt to provide the content of an imagined state that captures precisely the phenomenology of expressive music. How, therefore, can we adjudicate which of any competing accounts of the content of the imagined state is correct? Each account will claim that what it is like to be in the state is precisely what it is like to experience expressive music. This leads to two problems. First, it is not clear that the additional argumentative resources marshaled in the above paragraph will be sufficient to enable us to distinguish between accounts. Second, is it not clear what reply can be given to the person who claims that what it is like for him or her to experience music as expressive is *not* captured by the proffered account. Despite the contributors to the debate being qualified and experienced listeners to music, there is no agreement as to the best description of the phenomenology.

The third group of accounts construe expression as a matter of an aroused feeling. That is, expressive properties are "response-dependent": they depend for their nature and existence on the response of the audience. This has the obvious advantage of simplicity; it does not require elements such as experienced resemblance or the imagination that might require elaboration elsewhere. It also, as we shall see, has some drawbacks.

The so-called "arousal theory" can be stated in plausible and implausible versions. The claim that a work expresses an emotion if it arouses the full-blooded emotion in every member of the audience has little to recommend it. It is, however, plausible to claim that among the mental states caused by a work, is some noncognitive state that has a role to play in our experience of the work as expressive. Roger Scruton made this claim as part of a general aesthetic theory in his *Art and Imagination*: "the experience of hearing the sadness in the music is in some irreducible way analogous to hearing the expression of sadness – say, in another's voice" (Scruton 1974: 127).

Scruton's postulation of an irreducible analogy rested on the claim that the thought content of an experience cannot be specified independently of the experience. Hence only the total experiences can be compared. The claim is not plausible, the content of an experience can be stated in propositional form, and Scruton has since revised his account (Budd 1985: 147; Scruton 1997: 140–70).

Further attempts to elucidate Scruton's analogy leave us with something like this: *A* expresses *E* if, among the mental states caused by *A*, is some noncognitive state which stands in the right kind of relation to the appropriate reaction to the expression of emotion in the central case (Matravers 1998). However, this account still faces a number of problems of which I will mention only three. First, the capacity to cause feelings or emotions is not distinctive to expression. Many things sadden me which are not thereby expressive of sadness. Second, "dry-eyed critics" (to use Bouwsma's phrase) claim both to experience a piece of music as expressive and not to be in any feeling or emotional state. Finally, the expressive quality seems located in the wrong place; to hear music as sad is not to hear music and feel sad, it is to hear the sadness in the music. The first problem can be rebutted by adding further conditions. Not only must the noncognitive mental state be aroused by the music, it must be present in the listener's consciousness along with the music and its existence and nature immediately causally dependent on the music. Attempts to defend the theory from the second and third problems run the risk of playing down the significance of the aroused noncognitive state. This might rebut the problems, but at the cost of losing what is distinctive about the position.

Although the arousal theory is widely thought to have failed as a theory of expression, elements of arousal feature in a number of recent theories of expression. Jenefer Robinson has written extensively on the effects music has on listeners. Her view on the experience of expression is akin to that of Levinson, although she also allows that the experience might take other forms. In particular, we can hear the music as "a psychological as well as a musical structure" (Robinson 2011: 209; see also Robinson 2005). Similar thoughts have recently been advanced by Charles O. Nussbaum (Nussbaum 2007). Nussbaum sees music as a complicated mode of representation with which we engage by listening. One of these representations is a form of mental model – in particular, a model that embodies analogues of Gibsonian "affordances." Such affordances are environmental invariants that present themselves to perceiving organisms as affording possibilities of action; that is, they stimulate a range of possible relevant motor responses. In recovering this representation from the musical surface, we "specify motor hierarchies and action plans, which, in turn, *put the listener's body into off-line motor states that specify virtual movements through a virtual terrain or a scenario possessing certain features*" (Nussbaum 2007: 47). Put another way, "music puts the listener's body into states that would fit with or be appropriate to interacting with and simulating scenarios and terrains with certain features and with varying emotional valence" (Nussbaum 2007: 82). I stress that these theories involve only elements of arousal; neither Robinson nor Nussbaum would describe themselves as "arousal theorists."

I have, so far, outlined three accounts of the relation between music and the emotions: as involving the perception of resemblance, some kind of imagined state, and of aroused feeling. I have suggested that their range of application might be

limited, but have not found decisive arguments to dismiss any of them. However, if one reflects on the range of experiences we have of expressive music, this might not seem surprising. It is not obvious, for example, that Satie's Gymnopedie No. 1 provides the same kind of experience of expression as Beethoven's Fifth. Malcolm Budd has argued that a full account of expression will need to draw on a range of different accounts. What he describes as "the basic and minimal account" is a version of a resemblance theory:

> when you hear music as being expressive of emotion E – when you hear E in the music – you hear the music as sounding like the way E feels; the music is expressive of E if it is correct to hear it in this fashion or a full appreciation of the music requires the listener to hear it in this way. So the sense in which you hear the emotion in the music – the sense in which it is an audible property of the music – is that you perceive a likeness between the music and the experience of the emotion.
>
> (Budd 1995: 137)

Budd gives an extensive list of the resources in virtue of which music is able to mirror those aspects of feeling available to it. These include tension and relaxation, difference in upwards or downwards direction, magnitude, speed and rhythm of felt movement, and levels of felt energy. These points of resemblance lie either above or below the levels of consciousness (Budd 1995: 142). If they are part of our conscious experience, we can defend particular judgments with respect to them. If they are not, then (I assume) we are left with an experience of similarity but, to defend our judgment, we shall have to appeal to "a community of response" (ibid.).

The claim that music is expressive if it sounds the way our emotion feels is difficult to interpret further. The claim is not that music actually resembles our emotions; it is difficult to see how we could specify the relata in a way in which the claim would make sense. It is rather that music sounding the way our emotions feel is the most perspicuous description of our experience of expressive music; it captures what the experience is like in an enlightening way. Even if one granted the first part of this (it does seem to capture what our experience is like) one might have doubts about the second (how enlightening is the claim?). It is not clear we have a sufficiently robust grasp of the way the properties apparently common to both are manifested in either to make the resemblance claim very enlightening. However, as a phenomenological description, it might be the best that is available to us.

As well as this "basic and minimal" account "there are other conceptions of expressive perception and the musical expression of emotion [which] exploit the accretions that the mere perception of alikeness between music and feeling is liable to attract" (Budd 1995: 147). The three main "accretions" Budd lists correspond roughly to the arousal theory, to Walton's theory and Levinson's theory (although there are important differences in nuance in all of the accounts). Finally, Budd allows that our conception of expressiveness can be broadened "by dropping the demand that the imagining must be done in virtue of a perceived similarity between the music and the feeling imagined and allowing that the imagining can legitimately be controlled by the music in other ways" (Budd 1995: 152).

Budd's generous pluralism is justified, if at all, by reflecting on our experience of music and on the nature of our judgments on music. If one or both of those cannot fit under a single account, then we have reason to allow accounts that do seem descriptively accurate to take their place alongside each other (it is noteworthy that Budd claimed that an adequate theory of music would not be "monolithic" in his first published work on the subject; Budd 1985: 176). Although few are as explicit as Budd, other theorists (including Levinson and Walton) allow that there are as conceptions of expression apart from those illuminated by the accounts they put forward.

See also Expressivism (Chapter 11), Goodman (Chapter 18), Wollheim (Chapter 20), Imagination and make-believe (Chapter 31), Metaphor (Chapter 34), Tragedy (Chapter 40), Music (Chapter 61).

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40
TRAGEDY

Alex Neill

Philosophical interest in the art of tragedy, an interest which is as ancient as tragedy itself, has tended to center around two thoughts, both of which were presaged in the first sustained philosophical discussion of tragic drama, Aristotle's *Poetics* (1987). One is the thought that tragedy is in one way or another an especially philosophical genre of art, a thought for which many have found encouragement in Aristotle's claim, in *Poetics* 9, "that poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history." The other is the thought that there is something deeply puzzling about the nature of the response that tragedy appears to demand from its audience, a thought inspired by Aristotle's description, in *Poetics* 14, of the tragic poet's task as being "to provide the pleasure which derives from pity and fear by means of mimesis." Given that the experience of tragedy is one which involves fundamentally passions that are by nature "negative," how can that experience be one of pleasure? The focus of this chapter will be on reflection on these thoughts in the Western philosophical tradition. (On the history of critical theories of tragedy, see Wellek 1955. On psychoanalytic theory and tragedy, see Kuhns 1991.)

The experience of tragedy

Works of tragedy, whatever else they may be, are narratives of human suffering, and at its simplest, the question posed by Aristotle's characterization of our experience of tragic art in terms of pleasure is that of how we can take pleasure in representations of human beings in pain. This has been taken by some (e.g. Burke 1990: 41–44) to be a question about human psychology: why is it that our responses to suffering as it is depicted in tragedy differ from our responses to suffering in everyday life, in which context it rarely elicits pleasure? By others (e.g. Nietzsche 1993), it has been seen as a question of morals: there would be something repugnant about a person or culture who or which commonly took pleasure in watching others suffer; yet isn't this precisely what we are doing when we enjoy tragic works of art? And it is also a question of aesthetics: tragedies are among our most highly valued works of art, and the value that we attach to them lies in the nature of the experiences which they offer us. But if those experiences involve our taking pleasure in the portrayal of suffering, then the value that we attach to tragedy itself starts to look problematic.

One of the oldest answers to these questions, and one which echoes Aristotle's suggestion that the pleasure that we take in tragedy is in one way or another dependent on the fact that its object, the tragic work of art, is a mimesis (to put it crudely, a creative imitation), suggests that the key to understanding the pleasure that we take in tragedy lies in recognizing that what tragedy presents us with is *fictional*. We can unproblematically take pleasure in tragedy's portrayal of suffering, it is maintained, precisely because we know that no one is really suffering up there on the stage; what we are responding to is, after all, only a story. By itself, however, this suggestion does not get us very far. For one thing, pointing to the fact that the suffering depicted in a tragedy is fictional hardly explains why we might take pleasure in its depiction. For another, it is far from clear that we *do* regard the content of tragedy as merely fictional; to the contrary, over the centuries it has been maintained in a variety of ways that part of the value of tragedy lies in its capacity to show us something of profound truth and importance about ourselves. Finally, the appeal to the fictional status of tragedy to explain the pleasure that we take in it fails to address the real difficulty implied by Aristotle's characterization of tragic pleasure. For given Aristotle's account of the matter, what looks problematic about our experience of tragedy is not simply that it involves pleasure in the portrayal of suffering, but rather that it is an experience which involves both pleasure *and* the arousal of emotions such as pity and fear, emotions which Aristotle himself, in the *Rhetoric* (1984), defined partly as feelings of *pain*. Appeal to our awareness of the fictional status of tragedy renders the latter aspect of our experience of tragic art all the more mysterious, for the awareness of fictionality that is supposed to allow us to take pleasure in what is depicted would, if it were effective in this respect, seem likely to be an effective prophylactic against our being distressed by tragedy at all.

A different account of our experience of tragedy that does try to acknowledge both delight and distress as elements of that experience holds that these elements are distinct, and aroused by different aspects of the work: distress by what the work depicts (roughly, its content), and delight by the manner in which it depicts it (roughly, the formal aspects of the work). (A recent version of this suggestion is defended in Eaton 1982, for example.) However, this suggestion again fails to address the real difficulty implied by Aristotle's characterization of tragic pleasure. For Aristotle's suggestion is precisely that the pleasure experienced by the audience of tragedy is *not* something distinct from the "negative" emotions of pity and fear that the audience experiences; it is, rather, the pleasure "*of*," or "*derived from*," those emotions. As Hume puts it, "it seems an unaccountable pleasure which the spectators of a well-written tragedy *receive from* sorrow, terror, anxiety, and other passions that are in themselves disagreeable and uneasy" (Hume 1987: 216). What looks puzzling about our experience of tragedy, that is, is not simply the fact that one and the same work can be a source of both distress and delight, but rather the fact that in the experience of tragedy, distress and delight appear to be somehow bound up together, so that the audience, as Hume puts it, "are pleased in proportion as they are afflicted" (ibid.: 217).

Just what Aristotle himself had in mind when he wrote that the pleasure "appropriately" provided by tragedy is "the pleasure which derives from pity, and fear by means of mimesis" is far from clear. He says in *Poetics* 6 that the aim of tragic mimesis

with respect to pity and fear is to effect the *katharsis* of these emotions, which suggests that tragic pleasure is somehow a function of *katharsis*. Unfortunately, however, Aristotle never says explicitly in the *Poetics* just what he takes *katharsis* to involve. The term has been interpreted as referring to processes of emotional purgation or release, of moral and spiritual purification, of emotional education and of intellectual clarification, among other things, and these different interpretations of *katharsis* imply differing conceptions of the pleasure that tragedy provides its audience. It is unlikely that we shall ever be able to be certain which of these, if any, was Aristotle's own conception, though debate about the nature of *katharsis* continues to be one of the staples of philosophical aesthetics.

Philosophical interest in the nature of our experience of tragedy reached its highest point in the eighteenth century, during which it was discussed by most of the distinguished philosophers of the time, as well as by a host of others. Two accounts of the matter put forward during this period were particularly influential. The first, advocated by Adam Smith among others, attempted to relate the distress and the delight involved in our experience of tragedy by identifying the psychological mechanism underlying the distressing emotions experienced as sympathy, and arguing that the operation of sympathy, because of its social utility, is naturally pleasurable to human beings even when the emotions communicated sympathetically are painful. (A contemporary version of this sort of account can be found in Feagin 1983.) The second, advanced by Hume, held that while the audience's delight and distress are responses to different aspects of a work of tragedy – the distress to what the work depicts, the delight to the "eloquence" and "genius" with which it depicts it – these responses merge as the delight, which is dominant, overpowers and somehow "converts" the distress in such a way as to reinforce the former: "the impulse or vehemence, arising from sorrow, compassion, indignation, receives a new direction from the sentiments of beauty. The latter, being the predominant emotion, seize the whole mind, and convert the former into themselves" (Hume 1987: 220).

Both of these accounts of our experience of tragedy are open to criticism. Hume himself objected to the former on the grounds that the operation of sympathy is not always pleasurable; and the claim that sympathy underlies all of the audience's distress in response to what is depicted in tragedy might also be questioned. Hume's own account, on the other hand, suffers from the obscurity of the notion of "conversion" to which he appeals. A more general criticism, however, is that both accounts – and in this they are typical of accounts of our experience of tragedy advanced in the eighteenth century – take the question posed by that experience to be essentially one of psychology, to be answered primarily if not entirely in psychological terms, with very little thought about the workings of tragedy as a form of art. Their question, in effect, is "what sort of creatures must we be for the peculiar combination of delight and distress characteristic of our experience of tragedy to be possible?" And this represents a radical departure from Aristotle's approach, which is guided rather by the question "what sort of a thing must tragedy be to provide us with the distinctive sort of experience that it does?" Or, to put the point slightly differently, while Aristotle saw tragedy primarily as raising interesting philosophical questions about art and the making of it, the eighteenth-century theorists typically saw it primarily as raising questions about human psychology. In the move from the

former emphasis to the latter, tragedy itself, as a distinctive form of human expression, largely dropped out of the picture. In the nineteenth century, it began to come back into focus. Although the nature of our experience of tragedy was never far from the minds of the great nineteenth-century philosophical theorists of tragedy, their primary concern was more Aristotelian, at least in the sense that their focus was more on the form and content of tragic art than on the psychology of its consumers. And this brings us to the other thought identified at the beginning of this chapter: the thought that there is something distinctively philosophical about the art of tragedy.

Tragedy and philosophy

Although Aristotle is often thought of as the source of the idea that tragedy is in some more or less unique way a philosophical genre of art, in fact the statement from *Poetics* 9 quoted at the beginning of this chapter, when it is understood in its context, provides no direct endorsement of that idea. The temptation to see Aristotle as defending tragedy's philosophical credentials stems largely from the widely shared recognition that one of his concerns in the *Poetics* is to respond to the criticisms of tragic poetry and other forms of mimetic art made by Plato, most notably in the *Republic* and the *Ion*. Plato, in turn, was concerned to respond to the traditional Greek conception of their poets as teachers and philosophers in the literal sense of "lovers of wisdom." In short, Plato saw poetry, and in particular tragic poetry, as a rival to philosophy, whose claims to purvey wisdom were potentially damaging both to individuals and to the state, and hence needed to be quashed; thus one of his main charges against poetry was that it is not grounded in, and expressive of, genuinely philosophical understanding. In seeing Aristotle as accepting Plato's challenge, in *Republic* 10, to "champions who love poetry" to come forward to defend her, then, it is not surprising, particularly given the claim that he makes in *Poetics* 9, that many have also seen Aristotle as attempting to defend tragedy's philosophical respectability.

In a sense, indeed, he was. However, it is no part of Aristotle's defense of poetry to show that the tragic poet is doing the work of the philosopher, far less that tragedy is itself a species of philosophy. His response to Plato's charge that poetry is not grounded in reason consists rather in an extended and subtle attempt to show that the writing of tragedy is a *technê*, a productive activity which employs rational means in the pursuit of a predetermined practical end. His statement in *Poetics* 9 that the tragic poet deals in universals rather than particulars is subordinate to this project: the end aimed at by tragedy, Aristotle holds, is the *katharsis* of pity and fear through mimesis, and "speaking" in terms of universals rather than particulars – and in that sense being "more philosophical" than the historian – is one of the means by which the tragic poet is best able to achieve this end. Aristotle's response to Plato, to put it very briefly, is that tragedy is an art informed by reason and knowledge, and one that has cognitive value, but it is not itself a species of – and hence it is no rival to – philosophy.

The relationship between art and philosophy, and between tragedy and philosophy in particular, is much closer in Hegel's thought than it is in Aristotle's. For in Hegel's view, art and philosophy have the same aim: that of grasping and expressing the nature of reality, or what Hegel calls "the Absolute." The difference between the

two lies in the kind of form which each gives this expression: while philosophy expresses the Absolute in conceptual thought, art does so in sensory forms. The history of art, according to Hegel, is part of the history of the development of our grasp of the Absolute and of our attempts to express it in sensory forms. The significance of tragedy in this history is that in its most developed form, tragedy lies on the boundary between art and philosophy, marking the end – the highest and final point – of art's development. In tragedy of the Romantic stage (which in Hegelian terms stretches from the medieval to the modern periods), art comes as close as it can to fulfilling its "supreme task" of "bringing to our minds and expressing the Divine, the deepest interests of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of spirit" (Hegel 1975: I, 7). Beyond Romantic tragedy, Hegel believes, art cannot fruitfully go: once the sense of the Absolute which is the content of art progresses beyond that which is given expression in Romantic tragedy, it has progressed to a point where it cannot be expressed in sensory forms, and art gives way to philosophy and to religion.

But if tragedy came closest to philosophical thought in the Romantic stage of its development, it was at its most beautiful during the classical period. For beauty, in Hegel's view, is a function of the harmony of artistic form and content, and this, he argued, reached perfection in classical art, in which the artistic forms employed by the Greeks were perfectly adequate to the sense of the Absolute which they were used to express. He argues that the purpose of classical tragedy is to demonstrate "the validity of the substance and necessity of ethical life" (Hegel 1975: II, 1222). It achieves this first by showing the "collision" between different aspects of the ethical that occurs when the latter is fragmented and particularized in human social life: thus, in his favorite example, Sophocles's *Antigone* dramatizes the collision between the authority of the state (symbolized by Creon) and family love (symbolized by Antigone). These aspects of ethical life collide because "each of the opposed sides … can establish the true and positive content of its own aim and character only by denying and infringing the equally justified power of the other" (ibid.: II, 1196). The business of tragedy is then to show the "resolution" of conflict of this sort, which it can do in a variety of ways. From the aesthetic point of view, Hegel holds, the most satisfying form of resolution involves the destruction of the characters who embody "false one-sidedness," as happens in the *Antigone*, for these characters, just in virtue of their one-sidedness, are in conflict not only with others but with themselves: since the power that they oppose is as justified as the power that they one-sidedly represent, "they violate what, if they were true to their own nature, they should be honouring" (ibid.: II, 1217), and hence in effect self-destruct. Even when a tragedy is resolved in this fashion, however, its message is positive, it affirms the fundamental unity of the ethical – "the eternal substance of things emerges victorious" – "because it strips away from the conflicting individuals only their false one-sidedness, while the positive elements in what they willed it displays as what is to be retained, without discord but affirmatively harmonized" (ibid.: II, 1199).

Although Hegel has been criticized on the grounds that some of his interpretations of the Greek tragedies (and in particular of the *Antigone*; see e.g. Bungay 1984: 165ff.) are less than fully supported by the works themselves, it is a significant aspect of his discussion that it is based on thought about particular works of tragic art, and is

sensitive to the differences between those works. Thus, for example, he recognizes that forms of tragic resolution which do not involve the annihilation of the protagonists are also possible. The most significant of these is that represented in what Hegel describes as "the eternally marvellous" *Oedipus at Colonus*, where "the unity and harmony of the entire ethical order" is affirmed in "an inner reconciliation" in the character of Oedipus who, before he dies, "expunges all his own inner discord and is purified within" (Hegel 1975: II, 1219). The significance of this form of resolution, in Hegelian terms, lies not least in the fact that it shows how classical tragedy, while expressive of the sense of the Absolute that is the content of art at this stage of its history, is also a force in the development of that sense into something more adequate. For in the move from the type of resolution that we see in *Antigone* to that which we see in *Oedipus at Colonus* there is a move away from the emphasis on objectivity which is the hallmark of the classical stage of art, during which "the spiritual was completely drawn through its external appearance" (ibid.: I, 517), towards the occupation with subjectivity that is the hallmark of the Romantic stage, during which the content of art is man's sense of the "inner world" of spirit. (Thus, as Hegel might, if tendentiously, have put it, Antigone and Creon are essentially symbols, while Oedipus is the beginnings of a person.) And it is in Romantic tragedy, Hegel believes, that art comes closest to an adequate representation of spirit. The subject matter of tragedy by this stage of its development is "the subjective inner life of the character," and at its best, in Shakespeare's hands, these characters are "concretely human individuals," "complete men" and, crucially, "free artists of their own selves" (ibid.: II, 1227–28).

Hegel's claim that the importance of tragedy lies in what it reveals about the nature of reality is echoed by Schopenhauer. Like Hegel, Schopenhauer saw the arts in general as engaged fundamentally in the same task as philosophy; both "work at bottom towards the solution of the problem of existence" (Schopenhauer 1966: II, 406). However, since Schopenhauer's metaphysics are very different from Hegel's, he develops a very different picture of tragedy and the precise nature of its philosophical significance.

Schopenhauer argues that the nature of reality is quite different from that which is presented to us in sense experience. Reality, he argues, is Will, a single arational and impersonal force that is constantly in flux. This Will manifests or "objectifies" itself in Platonic Ideas, which differ with respect to the clarity with which it does so in them. With the important exception of music, Schopenhauer holds, the function of the arts is the "expression and presentation" of these Ideas. The greater the clarity with which Will is manifest or "objectified" in an Idea, the more valuable, because the more revelatory of the nature of reality, is the art form which presents and expresses that Idea.

The Idea which is the subject of poetry, that of "man in the connected series of his efforts and actions" (Schopenhauer 1966: I, 244), is the Idea in which Will manifests itself most clearly; hence of all the representational arts, poetry is the most valuable. And tragedy, Schopenhauer holds, is "the summit of poetic art." For in representing "the unspeakable pain, the wretchedness and misery of mankind," tragedy reveals to us more clearly than anything else the most important feature of reality: "the antagonism of the will with itself" and the fact that "chance and error" are "the rulers of the world" (ibid.: I, 252–53).

However, in Schopenhauer's view tragedy is significant not merely because of the importance of what it reveals to us concerning the nature of reality, but also because in the experience of tragedy we come to recognize the only appropriate response to the terrible truth it presents. This is to adopt an attitude of "resignation": the spectator "becomes aware … that it is better to tear his heart away from life, to turn his willing away from it, not to love the world and life" (Schopenhauer 1966: I, 435). The greatest tragedies, Schopenhauer holds, are those in which this attitude of resignation is not only suggested by a work but also represented in its characters.

At this point, an important difference between the approaches to tragedy taken by Aristotle, Hegel and Schopenhauer begins to emerge. Like Schopenhauer, Aristotle has a view about what makes a work of tragedy good, a view based on an account of the purpose or function of tragic art. But in Aristotle's case, this account is grounded in his extended consideration of the art of tragedy itself: Aristotle's account of tragedy is, so to speak, empirically based. Something like this is also true of Hegel's account of tragedy: given that his business is to provide an historical account of the development of art, it is essential for Hegel that his discussion of tragedy is grounded in and true to what tragedy, as a form of art, has in fact been like. Whether Aristotle and Hegel get things right in this respect is another matter, of course; but it is a matter which, as both philosophers would have accepted, is central to the assessment of the theories of tragedy which they offer.

Schopenhauer, however, is very different. He cheerfully concedes that "rarely in the tragedy of the ancients is this spirit of resignation [which in the best tragedies is 'exhibited' in the characters] seen and directly expressed." But then so much the worse, he says, for classical tragedy: "the tragedy of the moderns is at a higher level than that of the ancients." However, even "many of the moderns are also content to put the spectator into the mood" of resignation, without representing it in the characters of the drama themselves (Schopenhauer 1966: II, 434–35), again, he implies, so much the worse for these "moderns." What this indicates is that Schopenhauer's theory of tragedy is grounded not so much in consideration of what tragic art has been and is, as in his own metaphysics. "Given what I have said about the nature of reality and about the general purpose of art," he is in effect saying, "this is what *must* be true concerning the purpose and value of tragedy." In short, Schopenhauer's theory of tragedy is unfalsifiable by any considerations about what might be called the practice of tragedy; even if there were *no* actual works of tragedy which matched the theory, all that that would show would be that no work has yet reached "the summit and goal of tragedy" (ibid.: II, 435).

In the end, then, Schopenhauer is not so much doing philosophy of art as he is doing something else – broadly speaking, metaphysics – into the service of which art, or some more or less abstracted idea of it, is being pressed. And something similar might be said of Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1993), although in this case it is harder to characterize what it is that is being done: "philosophy of culture" is perhaps as good a description as any. For Nietzsche is less interested in *tragedy* – in the sense of a literary genre instantiated in a body of actual works of art – than he is in the *tragic*, in the sense of something like a condition of human sensibility. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's infrequent references to particular works of Greek tragedy betray very little of the knowledge of this part of literary history that he surely had; and the Aeschylus,

Sophocles and Euripides whom he discusses in that work are little more than caricatures of these authors and their achievements. Now a charge of this sort against Aristotle's *Poetics* or Hegel's *Aesthetics* would, were it accurate, be devastating; laid against *The Birth of Tragedy*, however, it is simply indicative of point-missing. For the classical tragedians and their works, as they appear in Nietzsche's essay, figure not as artists in a history of a genre of art, but rather as symbols of different cultural points or tendencies in Nietzsche's working out of a genealogy of the tragic spirit.

The main symbols in this genealogy are those of Dionysus and Apollo, Greek deities whom Nietzsche uses (again in creative rather than scholarly fashion) to stand for both metaphysical and artistic categories. The Apollonian spirit is that which is concerned with appearances; what it offers us is "beautiful illusion" (Nietzsche 1993: 16). The Dionysian spirit is that through which this illusion is shattered, and what is revealed to us is reality as it truly is: the Schopenhauerian Will, in which there is merely endless and pointless struggle of things in flux. As its objects are illusory, the Apollonian vision is too fragile to sustain human beings indefinitely. But with its object of what Nietzsche describes as a "witch's brew" of lust and cruelty (ibid.: 19), the Dionysian vision is too terrible for human beings to survive. The "supreme goal" of art, Nietzsche thinks, is to allow us to escape this dichotomy. Art, at its highest, does not attempt to evade the Dionysian truth but rather, by somehow (and in a way that Nietzsche is never very clear about) mediating it through the Apollonian, renders it bearable and even something to be exulted in.

The capacity to bear and indeed rejoice in the "witch's sabbath of existence," which is the achievement of the tragic spirit, is made possible by art, but not only and not always by tragedy, if the latter is understood, as it is by Aristotle and by Hegel, in literary-historical terms. For in Nietzsche's view, after Aeschylus and Sophocles the tragic spirit was extinguished in tragedy (in the literary-historical sense), snuffed out by Euripide's rejection of Dionysiac wisdom in favor of Socratic rationality. Nor is the tragic spirit to be found in post-Renaissance tragedy, in which music, through which the Dionysian wisdom is expressed, plays no substantial role. In fact, Nietzsche believed, at least at the time when he wrote *The Birth of Tragedy*, that the only art capable of rediscovering the spirit of tragedy was the music drama of Richard Wagner.

Philosophy and tragedy in the twentieth century

Philosophical thinking about tragedy was at its most alive in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and has been much less fashionable in the twentieth. But this is not to say that recent philosophy has had nothing to say about tragedy. In contemporary aesthetics, widespread interest in the role of emotional response in our understanding and appreciation of artworks, together with work by historians of the philosophy of art, particularly on Aristotle and Hume, has fueled a minor resurgence of the eighteenth-century interest in the nature of our experience of tragedy. Much of the recent writing on this topic persists in the eighteenth-century tendency to see the issues involved as primarily psychological (e.g. Morreall 1985), but the most valuable contributions to the contemporary debate, of which Schier's (1983 and

1989) are outstanding examples, are those which have resisted this tendency and attempted to illuminate the nature of our experience of tragedy by reference to the nature of tragic art itself.

The nineteenth-century thought that tragedy is in one way or another an art form of special philosophical significance has done less well in recent years. The rise of "analytic" philosophy in the early years of the twentieth century was built largely on disdain of the sort of large-scale theorizing about metaphysics, history and culture out of which the nineteenth-century philosophical concern with the nature of art in general and of tragedy in particular grew; and while the "continental" tradition in philosophy has been far more receptive to reflection on culture and history, it has too often been underwritten by relativism to have been able to take seriously the idea that tragedy has a special significance by virtue of its capacity to reveal reality and convey truth. This notwithstanding, the idea that tragedy is a particularly valuable source of insight for philosophy is far from extinct, and contemporary efforts to engage philosophically with tragedy while taking it seriously as a form of art, though still rare, are showing signs of becoming more philosophically respectable. Particularly influential have been Nussbaum (1986) and Williams (1993), both of whom focus on classical tragedy as a source of ideas about morality and ethics: the former to illuminate Greek ideas about human vulnerability to "moral luck," the latter to investigate the evolution of contemporary ideas of human agency, responsibility and necessity. Cavell (1987) reads Shakespearean tragedy as studies of epistemological skepticism, arguing that "the study of tragedy can and should entail reconceptions of what drives skepticism," and that Shakespearean tragedy, in particular, indicates "a path of recovery" from skepticism that philosophy itself has been unable to find. Work of this sort and caliber promises that philosophy's interest in the art of tragedy will be as abiding as it is ancient.

See also Plato (Chapter 1), Aristotle (Chapter 2), Hegel (Chapter 6), Idealism (Chapter 7), Nietzsche (Chapter 8), Art and knowledge (Chapter 37), Art, expression and emotion (Chapter 39).

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Further reading

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41
HUMOR

Ted Cohen

Humor is a marvelous subject for philosophers of art. The breadth of the subject is enormous. Humor is to be found in canonical works of art: plays, movies, stories, novels, paintings, operas and so forth. And it is found in contexts not typically associated with art: jokes, wit in ordinary conversation, and even in events to be witnessed in the world, like umbrellas blowing inside-out, dogs chasing their tails, or a baby grabbing the nose of an intrusive adult.

There are forms of humor – wit, most conspicuously – in which a premium attaches to the speed with which the humor is produced. As an example consider an achievement of Oscar Wilde reported by Professor Nicholas Rudall. In this story Wilde was a guest at a dinner party and another guest volunteered the claim that Wilde could produce a witticism on any subject whatever. Another guest took the challenge and offered as a subject "Queen Victoria." Wilde immediately responded, "Queen Victoria is not a subject."

Whether this story is accurate or apocryphal, it serves as an illustration. However much one may admire the cleverness of Wilde's response, the admiration clearly seems significantly increased when one considers that Wilde produced the remark immediately, on the spot. Perhaps one imagines that one could oneself have made this response given enough time to work on it, say a week or so. In this regard, the celebration of spontaneous and quick humor, the appreciation of wit has some resemblance to the appreciation of artistic improvisation in general, and perhaps particularly in the case of jazz. A member of an improvising jazz group responds to another member who has just played an improvised solo and now the new member, on the spot, produces a solo that both recalls the original theme and acknowledges the improvisation just heard. It is likely that all the music played be notated and then the entire sequence played from a score, but there seems no doubt that there is a special appreciation of the music created, as it were, on the spot and without any aid. So it may be with displays of wit.

Thus humor is found both in and outside art, in both fictional and real contexts. This suggests, what is almost certainly true, that there can be no general, overarching "theory" of humor, unless the theory is so general and probably vague as to be utterly uninformative. The idea that there could be no perfectly general theory of humor, one that identified its causes and its character, is at least as old as Cicero and Quintilian, and is held by some contemporary authors including the author of this

chapter. But there have been such general theories at least since the seventeenth century, and they can be found described in the excellent encyclopedia entries listed in this chapter's bibliography, but they will be discussed only briefly in this chapter. Instead, this chapter will suggest a more general theory, but also say why neither this theory nor any other is likely to be definitive.

Eighteenth-century philosophers were accustomed to thinking of some human capacity as a "sense of beauty," by which they meant a capacity to be affected by beauty. Although that way of thinking has lapsed, along with thoughts of a "sense of morality" or "sense of virtue," it is still common to speak of a "sense of humor," presumably meaning by that a capacity to be affected by humorous things; and this is not a bad way to begin thinking about humor. For instance, one might start with an innocuous formulation like this:

H is humorous if and only if *P* finds it funny.

This formulation is reminiscent of eighteenth-century ethics and aesthetics, where we find propositions like these:

B is beautiful if and only if *P* is pleased by it.
V is virtuous if and only if *P* is pleased by (or approves of) it.

The immediate problem with these formulations, all of which say that something is beautiful or virtuous or whatever if and only if the thing is reacted to in some way by people, is that not all such things have the relevant effect upon all people. Thus the formulation must be refined. Unrefined, it will not do. For instance, one might establish that something is beautiful by showing that it gratifies people of taste; and one might establish that someone has taste by showing that he is gratified by things of beauty. But one cannot do both, because one could not get started. There will have to be an independent specification, either of beauty or of taste. No one understood this more clearly than Hume, who undertook first to say what makes one a competent judge, and then to identify beauty in terms of its effect upon such judges.

This problem is present acutely when we try to understand humor. It may well be true – how could it not? – that something is humorous if and only if it is found funny by someone with a sense of humor; but it seems plain that there is no chance of saying either what humorous things are, or what a sense of humor is, independently. The reason why is twofold. First, the range of humorous things is enormous, encompassing things both inside and outside art, including plays by Aristophanes and Shakespeare, Marx Brothers movies, pratfalls, cartoons, riddles and drawings, to name only a few. This bewildering array is made even more diverse and intractable when we recall an observation of Aristotle's, namely that some things which give no pleasure have "imitations" that do give pleasure. This distinction, if anything, is even more conspicuous in the case of humor. In movies, literature and elsewhere we find depictions of objects and events, which depictions are humorous, while the objects and events would not be humorous if encountered in real life.

The second reason why such formulations are unlikely to succeed is that virtually no one's sense of humor reaches to every humorous thing. Someone with a richly

humorous sense of wordplay and wit, likely a fan of Oscar Wilde, may well abhor the movies of the Three Stooges.

If the formula were to be acceptable, it would have to be in some refined version, on the order of something like this:

> *H* is humorous if and only if *P* finds it funny under certain appropriate conditions and *P* is the right kind of person.

Such a proposition may be true once the relevant conditions and kind of person are specified, but only if the most important questions are begged. But however the proposition fares, it leads to the question of what, as a matter of fact, it is about *H* on account of which *P* finds *H* funny. That is, what are the properties of *H* that make *H* funny? It is in answer to this question that theories of humor are offered.

It is generally agreed that there have been three major general "theories of humor," and it should be agreed that none of them can succeed as a theory of all humor. The three theories might be called the incongruity theory, the superiority theory, and the relief-from-tension theory.

The idea that humorous things are *incongruous* is present in the works of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Hazlitt and Kant, among others. Kant puts this by saying that "laughter is an affection arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing" (Kant 1928: 199). In order for this theory to have even an initial plausibility, the idea of "incongruity" must be understood broadly, so that things count as incongruous if they are logically impossible (or paradoxical), merely odd or somehow out of place or simply very unusual. And, of course, it may be the thing itself that is incongruous, or it may be that the incongruity is due to the thing in its context. Thus a bear riding a bicycle, a poor, badly dressed man at a fancy ball and a popcorn salesman at an opera all count as incongruous, and their humor is written off to their incongruity.

Even if some version of the incongruity theory is right about these things, right to find them humorous, and right to locate their humor in their incongruous display, the feebleness of the theory is readily apparent as soon as we notice that many, many incongruities are not found humorous, and many humorous items display no evident incongruity, however broadly the idea of incongruity is construed.

The idea that humor appears when one finds oneself feeling *superior* to someone is present in at least some works of Plato, Aristotle and Bergson (1956), but it is probably best known in the works of Hobbes, who declared that "laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly" (Hobbes 1928: ch. 9, §13).

Surely this is an apt description of the humor arising when fun is *made of* someone, when someone is presented as clumsy, inept, incompetent or unfortunate. And it is worth noting that this felt superiority can arise on either side, either on the side of those who truly are in superior positions, or on the side of those whose positions are inferior. In either case, the other side – the oppressors or the oppressed – are represented as inferior to the one who laughs. It makes considerable difference whether the one who laughs in expression of his own superiority is in fact truly in a

superior position, as, for instance, when the members of one race make fun of the race they have enslaved or dominate, or whether it is the downtrodden who find humor in *pretending* that their superiors are actually inferior, as, for instance, in jokes made about Nazis and Soviet Communists by those being brutalized by those people, exactly because the Nazis and Communists were in superior positions. It is a typical lack in superiority theories that they do not attend to the fact that the jokes, cartoons or skits in question are, after all, *fictions*, but fictions that are sometimes taken to represent genuine truths and sometimes not. What, after all, is the difference between chancing upon a stupid person doing something that strikes one as humorous, and encountering a joke or cartoon in which a stupid person is portrayed as doing something that strikes one as humorous? Our engagement with fictions is not at all well understood, nor how we engage fictional characters, how we feel for them or about them, and to the extent that this is not understood, it is difficult to see just how to make sense of the superiority theory as a general theory.

Even if the superiority theory could make good on its need to deal with fictional elements, the theory would still founder on the simple facts that not all cases of felt superiority are humorous and that not all examples of humor have anything remotely to do with superiority. Consider a nature documentary film showing the behavior of orang-utans in Indonesia. Whenever I have seen this film, I and everyone else in the audience have been amused by one particular episode in which an extended family of orang-utans is shown making its way through the jungle. All but one of the family are young and relatively small, and they make their way by swinging from vine to vine. The oldest male, however, has grown too heavy to swing from vines, and although he tries from time to time, he always comes crashing down as his weight pulls the vine loose. He is reduced to running as fast as he can along the jungle floor trying to keep up with his airborne relatives. Why is this funny? Do I feel superior to the overweight beast? I don't think so. I just find it funny. Is it somehow incongruous that he should be running and huffing while others are swinging and gliding? I don't think so.

The best-known exponent of the idea that humor comes with *relief* or the *release of tension* surely is Freud (1976), although Spencer (1911) had such a theory at about the same time. The idea, roughly, is that social and psychological constraints make it impossible for us to express certain thoughts and feelings, and so those mental phenomena, as it were, build up in us and finally are given expression in the laughter promoted by jokes about the very things we have been forbidden to express ourselves about ingenuously: for instance, our sexual impulses, and our instincts for aggression. This is an extremely useful idea, probably with even wider application than Freud gives it. There are any number of things we find ourselves constrained not to speak of, or give active voice to, because of political, social, moral or other strictures that seemingly declare these things out of bounds. And yet we think about them, wish to declare our interest in them, and have a need to express ourselves about them. So we do this with jokes, perhaps partly for the reason Freud suggests, that these things are just bursting out of us anyway, but also because we take advantage of a presumption to the effect that humor is light, good-natured, benign and therefore virtually universally acceptable.

Again, however, it is undeniable that there are myriad examples of humor that have nothing to do with this kind of release of tension.

Each theory has indeed identified a feature characteristic of some examples of humor. But it is almost immediately apparent that none of these characteristics is either necessary or sufficient for humor. That is, not every incongruity is funny, nor is everything funny incongruous, and so on for the other two theories. Indeed there are no necessary or sufficient conditions for humor, at least as far as this chapter's author can see.

An oddity of theories in aesthetics – and for that matter elsewhere in philosophy – is that it is not always clear in what sense they are *theories*. What do they explain? What do they predict? How are they to be tested? This seems especially problematic in aesthetics, perhaps most acutely when one is considering humor. It is a commonplace that the effects of works of art cannot, in general, be realized by substitutes for the works. That is, no description of a musical work, or a novel, or a painting can do what the music, writing and painting do. With regard to humor, the point virtually is enshrined in the saying "you had to be there."

Consider: in music, a movement from the leading tone to the tonic will sound satisfying. Is that true? The answer, surely, is sometimes, but not always. And similarly with humor. Is incongruity or absurdity funny? The answer is: sometimes; it depends. How about a dog wearing sunglasses? A painting of some dogs playing poker? A small child firing a shotgun? A man giving birth? Anyone faced with these questions, if prudent, will say that it is necessary to experience the thing oneself. The descriptions alone are insufficient.

The theories are still worth considering, however, if only as partial descriptions of some humor, especially if it is possible to regard them as three parts of a single theme. It may be possible to do this if we fudge a little and take them to be relatively narrow descriptions of what, in general, are kinds of *anomaly*.

Now just as none of the three theories is comprehensive, neither is the idea of anomaly wide enough to capture the three. But it may be an interesting idea to the extent that it captures something yet more general that is suggested by each of the three common theories. Still, just as with the three theories, neither is anomalousness either a necessary or a sufficient condition for humor. Yet it may be worth looking into the fact of anomalousness to ask just why, when it is, it is humorous.

An anomalous thing is irregular, unusual, unexpected and often unsettling. We may ask, when an anomaly is funny, why is it funny? What is the humor in anomaly?

A provisional answer to this question discovers a striking oddity, namely that there seem to be two reasons why anomaly is (sometimes) funny, and these reasons are virtually opposites of one another. The first is that anomalies can suggest that we have power over the structures that usually restrain us, while the second is that an anomaly can exhibit our powerlessness to comprehend and subdue the world in which those structures exist.

It has been noted that humor often arises when one feels superior. Hobbes seems to have thought laughter is almost always associated with something like the conquest of one's enemy. But the idea of *power*, power over something or someone, extends into more subtle areas. The humor of wordplay and related forms of wit, for instance, may fairly be thought of as incorporating a sense of power, the power to free oneself from the normal strictures of language. More generally, the humor of anomaly regularly involves the placement and action of things – including people – in circumstances

not regularly permitted by society or by nature. This is, perhaps, the humor of *freedom*. It is our freedom, at least in imagination, from the linguistic, social, cultural and natural constraints that are the inhibitions of our normal lives.

Although it has been less commonly noted, the humor of anomaly sometimes bespeaks not power but powerlessness. When an anomaly has the form of extreme incongruity, so exaggerated that the situation is truly absurd, then the joke (or cartoon or other form) presents something genuinely incomprehensible. In such a case one does not imagine oneself with power over anything, and yet one may find humor. One is not in a mood of exultation or triumph, but of something quite different. It is not the opposite mood. It is not merely a mood of resignation, as if one were submitting to a greater power. It is a mood of acceptance, of willing acknowledgment of those aspects of life that can be neither subdued nor fully comprehended.

The relation of ethics to aesthetics is a perennial topic in the philosophy of art and it has special prominence within the topic of humor, especially with regard to jokes. It is not at all uncommon to hear certain jokes described as being "in bad taste," or otherwise objectionable, presumably on moral grounds. Purveyors of such humor commonly respond, in defense, that the joke after all *is* funny, that the objector has no "sense of humor," and (1) the funniness of the joke is a fact independent of any moral considerations and (2) that any moral considerations are irrelevant in appraising the joke. This controversy parallels almost perfectly the controversy in general philosophy of art between those who think moral considerations relevant to the value of works of art and those who think aesthetic considerations are entirely independent of moral ones.

It is a wonderful thing about humor that it is the province of the powerful and of the powerless, that it is a response to weakness and to strength. Small wonder that no theory is able to say just what makes a humorous thing humorous. It would be a shame if it could, because then the pervasive possibility that we humans cannot tell when and where we might laugh would disappear, and human life would be so different as not to be recognizably human.

See also Taste (Chapter 25), Fiction (Chapter 32), Art and ethics (Chapter 38).

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42
CREATIVITY

Margaret A. Boden

Philosophers and psychologists have offered many definitions of creativity, and many explanations (Krausz *et al.* 2009; Gaut 2010). The core notion, however, is that creativity is the capacity to generate ideas or artifacts that are both new and positively valuable.

"Valuable" can mean many different things. For instance, a drama or a novel may be valuable because it throws light on human nature and/or experience. A painting may be valuable because it is beautiful and/or implicitly condemns an act of war. An art installation may be valuable because it makes us think. A biochemical discovery may be valuable because it cures disease, and an invention because it is useful. Moreover, an idea or artifact can be valuable in several ways simultaneously.

In the context of the arts, a large part of what is meant is that the new structure is aesthetically valuable. It follows that one's theory of aesthetics will affect one's criteria of creativity. Even if a philosopher discussing "beauty" (or any other aesthetic concept, such as harmony, elegance, sublimity, expression, communication of emotion, etc.) never mentions creativity, judgments about it will be tacitly implied. For this reason creativity is an appropriate topic for a handbook of aesthetics, not just for handbooks of psychology or art history.

Intentionalist philosophers in general would agree. But formalist and structuralist critics deny this (Gaut and Livingston 2003). They argue that psychological facts about the author are irrelevant to the artwork itself. However, their writings stress the audience's reaction, which (they say) is to recognize the creativity shown in the artwork or to respond to it in a creative way themselves. Even on their account, creativity cannot be ignored.

We take it for granted that art is a Good Thing. Plato did not. He thought it frivolous at best and dangerous at worst (Plato 1961). He saw the arts as irrational: instead of leading people to the truth, they aim to excite emotion – which is not even directed at "real" people or events. Although they sometimes depict worthy role models, they often encourage unethical behavior. A work of art is valuable if it orients its audience toward the Forms. But since only metaphysics can lead us to them, only that is intrinsically worthwhile. So aesthetics, considered as the study or justification of the intrinsic value of art, is either trivial or impossible.

As for artistic creativity, Plato famously attributed this to divine inspiration: "a poet is holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside

himself and reason is no longer in him … for not by art [i.e. skill] does he utter these, but by power divine" (*Ion* 534a–b). If that's so, then a naturalistic (scientific) explanation of creativity is impossible.

Many since have made similar claims, attributing the artist's inspiration not to the Muses but to some other supernatural force. Faced with an extraordinary talent such as Mozart's, people today often imply that he was literally superhuman. This "inspirational" theory even appeared in *The Times*, when the critic Bernard Levin commented on the play *Amadeus*. Comparing the conscientiously competent Salieri with his socially undisciplined contemporary Mozart, Levin said – and clearly meant it – that Mozart was divinely inspired.

Divine creativity is a philosophical mystery. The medieval theologians spent a great deal of time discussing God's creation of the material world. The core problem was that God was supposed to be immaterial. How, then, could he create something material – in other words, something utterly novel? Some said that he created the world out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). Others argued that this was impossible, sometimes inferring that the creator of nature somehow shares nature's properties. But with no essential distinction between creator and created, can we really speak of "creation" at all? In short, the concept seemed intractable.

Aesthetics faces similar puzzles. For that theological problem is a special case of a paradox that faces aestheticians and psychologists too. How can truly creative, truly novel, ideas possibly arise? Any adequate account of creativity must address that question – which appears to be beyond the reach of science. (Karl Popper, for instance, argued that the "context of discovery" is not only irrelevant to the philosophy of science but also an insuperable stumbling block to a scientific psychology – Popper 1965.)

Immanuel Kant saw the theological version of the question as unanswerable, being one of the four metaphysical "antinomies." Where human creativity was concerned, he focused on the value, not the novelty. In his *Critique of Judgment* (1987), he argued that beauty is the core aesthetic value and artistic creativity is the ability to produce beautiful things. This is not a strictly rational activity, nor (*pace* Plato) is it wholly spontaneous and undisciplined either.

For Kant, judgments of beauty are disinterested and in a sense universal. In other words, to say that this object is beautiful "to me," as one might say that the taste of this cheese is pleasant "to me," is "laughable" (ibid.: §7). Although in fact people disagree about which things are beautiful, Kant argued that disinterested *contemplation* would eventually lead to agreement and therefore that it is sensible to try to persuade someone that they should find an artwork beautiful. (By contrast, one would not say that someone should like a particular cheese – although one might urge them to try it again, hoping that they will acquire a taste for it.) But that is not to say that anyone can be forced, on pain of contradiction, to accept a given aesthetic judgment. In general, the appreciation of beauty involves a mentally harmonious recognition of formal harmony in the object (spatial in the visual arts, temporal in music).

Nature, for Kant, held a special place in aesthetics: "nature is beautiful because it looks like art, and art can only be called beautiful if we are conscious of it as art while yet it looks like nature" (ibid.: §45). This remark is most readily applied to the representational paintings and sculptures that were the accepted Western styles

when Kant wrote. Applying it to, for example, Islamic decorative art or to abstract art is more problematic. An abstract canvas or sculpture may, in some sense, look like nature. But to apply Kantian aesthetics across the board would require that one see all examples of formal harmony, all examples of beauty, as reminiscent of nature.

In addition, it would involve decisions about whether the paintings of Piet Mondrian or Jackson Pollock, the *objets trouvés* of Marcel Duchamp or the conceptual art of Tracey Emin or Damien Hirst, show the type of beauty or formal harmony posited by Kant. If they do not, then on his view they are not genuinely beautiful and are not really art.

Of course, there have been many redefinitions – and repudiations – of the concept of art since Kant's time. For example, both John Ruskin and R. G. Collingwood offered highly influential accounts (directed on Nature and emotional expression respectively), which imply that certain types of modern art are highly problematic in aesthetic terms (Boden and Edmonds 2010; Boden forthcoming a, b). (These disputes are further complicated by twentieth-century changes in the financial marketing and social contexts of art.) What is relevant here is that if one defines creativity in terms of some specific theory of aesthetics – in other words, if one insists that the "positive value" mentioned in the definition above is this one or that one – then objects regarded by some people as creative works of art will not be classified as creative, never mind as art.

Kantian aesthetics did not explain why we so often find craftwork beautiful. Or rather, it seemed to imply that we never do find it genuinely beautiful. Craftspeople, he said, simply follow rules, whereas artists, even though they may follow rules, add spontaneity (freedom, unpredictability), which is essential for beauty (ibid.: §§43–46). It would seem to follow that the pleasure felt in considering craftwork has more of what he called "sensibility" than of "understanding" or aesthetic "contemplation."

Besides offering a philosophical basis for seeing fine art as entirely distinct from the crafts, Kant gave an account of artistic "genius" that influenced the Romantics. They promulgated the myth of the Romantic genius, someone – a member of a tiny elite – blessed with some extraordinary and inexplicable faculty of creativity. And, like Plato, they stressed the "irrational" aspects of creativity. So whereas Kant himself had pointed out that even genius requires effort and training and that creative imagination must sometimes yield to disciplined judgment (ibid.: §§47–50), the moral popularly drawn from Romanticism was that effort, training and disciplined judgment have little or nothing to do with creativity.

This is a myth in three senses: it is still very widely believed, it is often used to excuse behavior that would otherwise be unacceptable and it is almost certainly false. There is no good psychological or neuroscientific evidence that some humans are endowed with a special faculty denied to the rest of us (Boden 2004: ch. 10). On the contrary, creativity appears to be based in everyday cognitive abilities: memory, perception, recognition, attention, noticing, reminding, comparing and so on (Perkins 1981). At most, some individuals – such as Mozart – may have been born with a more efficient version of an ability we all share. (The explanation for this might at base be very boring: for instance, increased storage capacity for short-term memory or higher speed of neuronal communication.)

One should not forget, however, that even the child prodigy Mozart (like other renowned composers) had to devote himself relentlessly to music for twelve years

before composing anything musically interesting, as opposed to precociously competent (Kunkel 1985). The reason for this is that it takes many years and much repetitive effort to learn the dimensions of an interestingly complex style of thinking or conceptual space. It also takes many years to discover what types of structure (e.g. what types of music) the space will and will not allow – and, crucially, to develop a sense of where the limits of the space can be most fruitfully *pushed* or altered so that the entire space is transformed. As a result of this learning process, the cognitive structures and processes in the person's head will naturally differ from Everyman's. Nevertheless, the difference between creative geniuses and the rest of us probably has more to do with motivation than with *inborn* cognition.

That last claim is supported by Howard Gardner's (1993) study of the driven personalities of seven twentieth-century creators drawn from various fields, including painting, poetry, music and dance. Gardner suggests that they share a general profile of motivation and morals. The "exemplary creator" comes from a family that is outside the centers of social power and influence and values education, without necessarily being educated. But it is soon outgrown and the young person finds a group of peers (often in a city) who share the same interests. This social support is crucial, especially when the creator (typically after many years of committed apprenticeship) comes up with an idea so different from those currently valued that it is not easily understood, still less accepted.

Self-confidence, stubbornness and exceptionally hard work are then needed, to persevere with and to polish the new insight. Energy and commitment are essential and the creator expects very high standards of himself or herself and others. But these apply to the creative work: they do not normally include high moral standards. Egotism, selfishness and ruthless exploitation of others are common. Gardner (1994: 150) speaks of "a legacy of destruction and tragedy" attending the friends and family of the creative person.

Seven case studies, admittedly, is not very many. However, there is a large body of psychometric evidence drawn from studies covering thousands of individuals to support Gardner's general conclusions (Sternberg 1999: chs 2–4). Reviewing this evidence, Hans Eysenck (1994) has shown that creativity is linked with a common cognitive style called "psychoticism," which includes psychotics at one extreme of the scale. Psychoticism is defined as a general tendency to widen or overgeneralize conceptual categories. It is not surprising to find it statistically associated with creative thinking, since creative ideas often involve an unusual analogy or a combination of dissimilar concepts. What may be more surprising is that this tendency can be encouraged or inhibited by specific psychotropic drugs and that explanations in terms of basic neuronal functions can suggest why this should be so. (Explanations of creativity couched in terms of psychoticism are very different from the psychodynamic explanations offered in Freud 1963.)

The relevance of this to Gardner's work is that cognitive overinclusiveness (psychoticism) is associated with particular personality traits. To give the good news first, it correlates highly with being imaginative, unconventional, rebellious, individualistic, independent, autonomous, flexible and intuitive. The bad news is that it also correlates strongly with being conceited, cynical, disorderly, egotistical, hostile, outspoken, uninhibited, quarrelsome, aggressive, asocial and – in some cases – psychopathic.

Some modern versions of "nature" aesthetics can be found in a surprising place: evolutionary psychology. Evolutionary psychologists have discussed a number of aesthetic values, seeking to show (1) that they are universal and (2) that they carry some adaptive benefit.

To support point (1) is not to deny that there are huge cultural differences in aesthetic values, nor even that these may sometimes swamp or cancel the *natural* universal preference. Rather, it is to say that, all things being equal, people from any culture will tend to prefer certain (visual, musical, etc.) features to others. And to support point (2) is not to claim that a visit to an art gallery is adaptive now, still less that we decide to visit the gallery because that is an adaptive thing to do (although it often is according to Miller 2000). Rather, it is to say that in our hominid and prehominid past it was adaptive to be attracted by those features in today's artworks that are *universally* valued.

Whether points (1) and (2) are correct is an empirical question and a very tricky one. There is a significant body of evidence, however, that certain aspects of art – and of artistic creativity as such – are explicable in evolutionary terms.

For instance, the "biophilia" hypothesis cites evidence that we are naturally drawn to certain visible aspects of landscape and therefore of visual art (Orians and Heerwagen 1992; Kellert and Wilson 1993). The explanation is that wandering animals (including early humans) need to be able to recognize places that are suitable habitats and having recognized them they need to stay in them (they need to prefer them, to find them attractive). Such places provide water, greenery, shelter and escape routes. These features are commonly preferred in paintings and photographs of landscapes. And they reach beyond depictions of landscape: the attractiveness of shiny things, from rich satins to silver lurex (and the polished chrome on cars), is due to our inborn preference for the light-reflective properties of sheets of still water.

Another evolutionary hypothesis is that the crafts differ from the fine arts in that their basic value, or aesthetic, is carried by the perceptual "affordances" for action built into human minds (Boden 2000). An affordance is a feature that is naturally recognized as providing (affording) an opportunity for doing something: walking, eating, holding, fighting, courting and so on (Gibson 1977). That is why crafts are universal across cultures, relatively unvarying as compared with fine art and appreciated by all. There is no acceptable definition of "craft" that would distinguish it clearly from "art" (Harrod 1999: 10). This is not surprising, because the psychological processes involved in creating and appreciating art can occur together with those involved in responses to perceptual affordances. (With respect to Kant's aesthetic, craftwork does not exploit unpredictability or stimulate contemplation, but its attractiveness or beauty is grounded in natural proclivities evolved in response to nature.)

As for creativity itself, Geoffrey Miller (2000) sees this capacity as being due to Darwin's second evolutionary principle, sexual selection. In a nutshell, females prefer males who produce surprising (though still intelligible) patterns. Miller argues that many familiar aspects of the creative behavior of artists – and countless examples of people's everyday behavior – can be explained in this way. Some critics see Miller's theory as an unverifiable, perhaps even implausible, "Just-So Story." However, he provides a huge, and widely diverse, body of data (and much subtle argumentation) in support of his view.

Motivation, personality and evolution are just some of the many dimensions of creativity. The others include the sociocultural context of the creative individuals or groups concerned. This can influence both the generation of ideas and their evaluation or acceptance.

The sociocultural context (ranging from the creator's personal friends and acquaintances to the wider society) provides the styles of thought and most of the specific ideas required for an individual to think creatively. Mozart did not invent music or musical instruments either. And Pablo Picasso did not invent *Las Niñas* – he reinvented it. In general, an individual's peer group is much more important in the generation of his or her ideas than is recognized by heroic, neo-Romantic, accounts of creativity.

This is especially clear in science, where people often work in groups, where the development of theory and experimentation is meticulously recorded in notebooks and where care is taken to acknowledge previously published ideas. A scientist's peer group includes laboratory technicians too. Many creative ideas have arisen from them, yet their contribution is systematically downplayed (Schaffer 1994).

But artists have their peer groups too and the stimulation of fellow artists can be important – both in bolstering motivation and in exploring ideas. The Salon des Refusés in the Paris of 1863 is an illustration. The art-establishment figures choosing the paintings to be shown in the established Salon rejected every Impressionist canvas. The Impressionists' response was to mount their own exhibition, its defiant title celebrating its difference. Besides getting their pictures seen by the public, this reinforced their sense of being involved in an aesthetically valid activity.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1999) distinguishes cultural, social and individual influences on creativity. These three are systematically and reciprocally linked. They result in an integrated phenomenon that cannot be identified only as happenings inside individuals' heads.

The artist's materials and physical environment are crucial too. "Cognitive technologies" in general enable people to think in ways they could not have done otherwise. Indeed, some philosophers argue that all-pervasive technologies – writing, computers, architecture, road signs and the like – are not merely aids to the mind but part of it: the mind is "extended" into/over the environment (Clark 1997, 2008). On that view, the artist's easel and atelier are as important as their ideas. The role of the physical material (or, for a writer, the visible written trace) in prompting sophistication in execution and changes in design has long been noted. Those design changes are gradual redefinitions – or, more accurately, an incremental definition – of the artist's purpose (Tomas 1958; Harrison 1978).

If creativity is not only ideas in individuals' heads, it does crucially involve ideas in individuals' heads. For that is where all ideas are actually generated. So some psychologists choose to focus on that dimension of creativity, asking just how novel (and valuable) ideas can arise. This is a question about concepts or cognition: the person's motivation and their social context are bracketed. The key question is how it is possible for new ideas to arise in someone's mind.

Nearly all psychologists who have discussed this question have defined creativity as a matter of novel combinations (or extensions) of familiar ideas. Even Freud, primarily interested in the underlying motivation, focused on associations between

already-present thoughts. Experimental studies of this type of creativity try to measure individual differences in (associative) creativity or to discover how various influences – from brainstorming to drugs – affect it (Sternberg 1999: chs 2–4).

Interesting questions arise also about just how such associations can happen. This question was addressed informally by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his commentator John Livingston Lowes (1951). Now it can be tackled with more rigor, though less subtlety, by using recent ideas about how concepts can be compared in the brain (Boden 2004: ch. 6). In addition, ideas from cognitive science about the internal structure of concepts can help us understand how combinational thinking can happen (Fauconnier and Turner 2002) and how analogies can be formed (Hofstadter and the Fluid Analogies Reseach Group 1995). Besides verbal associations and analogies, there are visual examples too (Schwitters's collages, for instance).

Combinational creativity is both constrained (mere chaotic ramblings are not aesthetically valuable) and unpredictable. The same applies to the two other forms of creativity defined below. Kant stressed both rules (constraints) and unpredictability, ascribing the latter to transcendental human freedom. But someone who adopts a naturalistic analysis of freedom can allow that free action – and creative thought too – is unpredictable. There are various, interestingly different reasons for this (Boden 2004: ch. 9). Here, what is important is that to regard creativity as explicable by science is not necessarily to believe that it is predictable.

Combinational creativity is not the only type of creativity. Two others are rarely investigated by experimental psychologists, but are the focus of much art criticism and art history and of most work in the computer modeling of creativity (Boden 2004: chs 6–8, 12). These are exploratory and transformational creativity (Boden 2004: 1–10, chs 3–5).

Both arise within some existing style of thought, artistic tradition or "conceptual space." Conceptual spaces are learnt from one's culture or borrowed from some alien culture. Examples include styles of painting, architecture, music, choreography, poetry and novel-writing … all the way to millinery and makeup.

In exploratory creativity, one explores a space, or aesthetic style, by moving through it along various pathways to see what previously undiscovered structures ("places") one can find, what the general potential of the style is, and what – and where – its limitations are. Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*, for instance, involves a series of pastiches exploring a number of familiar musical styles. (Tim Rice's lyrics rely more on combinational creativity, using punchy language and slang to relate the familiar biblical story.)

To explore a space, one follows the constraints that define the style concerned: while painting a picture in the Impressionist manner, one does not switch over to cubism. This need not be conscious, although evaluation (self-criticism) is usually conscious. As with other mental capacities, including seeing and speaking, creative thinking is largely unconscious. (If it were not, we would suffer paralyzing information overload.)

Exploratory creativity is not to be sneezed at: the vast majority of professional artists engage only in (combinational or) exploratory creativity. If the style is aesthetically valued in their culture, their exploratory maneuvers within it will find an appreciative audience. And there is plenty of room for surprises. In an interestingly

complex space, many previously unseen – and some previously unsuspected – structural possibilities exist. Moreover, the constraints or rules are sometimes marginally adjusted or tweaked. For example, a dress designer who is familiar with skirts with a frill at the base may add twenty frills, not just one – resulting in a flamenco skirt.

A minority of artists (and scientists), however, go further. Having mastered the existing style and having explored it to discover its potential and – significantly – its limits, they transform the space by altering or dropping one or more of its defining constraints. So the Pointillists, for instance, altered the constraint that a picture is painted with brushstrokes (large or small, crude or dainty) to one specifying brush points. Having done that, they spent some years exploring the newly transformed style to see just what they could, and could not, do within it. The new style had made new paintings possible – but it took a while to discover just what those possibilities were.

That is largely why it is rare for an artist to generate more than one major stylistic transformation in his/her lifetime (Picasso is an exception). In a retrospective exhibition, where a painter's canvases are hung chronologically, the evolution of the artist's creativity is visible. Typically, a transformative idea is followed by a spate of paintings exploring its potential and testing its limitations. Similarly, Arnold Schoenberg transformed Western music by passing from tonality to atonality, but then concentrated on exploring various different compositional rules or possibilities (Rosen 1976).

By definition, transformational creativity breaks the accepted rules. Things that were previously impossible – that is, unthinkable – are now possible. In short, this type of creativity – which can be modeled in self-transforming computer programs (Sims 1991; Todd and Latham 1992; Boden forthcoming c) – both exemplifies and demystifies the paradox mentioned earlier, of how something can apparently come from nothing.

But that is not to say that the newly possible ideas will be aesthetically acceptable. Indeed, it is transformational creativity that leads to the deepest disputes. For people have to be persuaded to accept the rule-breaking. They have to learn to value the new ("impossible") structures by situating them with respect to previous styles or by becoming familiar with them in their own right. Even for fellow artists of the avant-garde, this may take some time. Picasso kept his canvas of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* rolled up unseen for several years, so shocking was it to the aesthetic sensibilities even of his progressive friends.

Aesthetic appreciation, then, is partly a matter of knowledge. One needs to become familiar with a certain style and to be able to relate it to other already-valued styles. But this is not an exact science. Indeed, at base it is not a science at all. Aesthetic values are not proven by objective empirical evidence. Nor are they deduced from axioms – or if they are, as in highly formalist art, the axioms themselves have to be seen as valuable first. Rather, they are open to choice and agreed by social negotiation. This is true even if, as suggested earlier, they are partly rooted in our biology.

It follows that philosophical theories about aesthetic values (such as beauty, integrity, emotional expression, humanity, realism, abstraction, rationality, simplicity and complexity) are an essential aspect of our understanding of creativity. Science can tell us how new ideas can arise, in one of the three ways distinguished earlier. It can

allow for social as well as individual factors. And it can study the influence of motivation and personality. What it cannot do, in principle, is tell us whether we should or should not value beauty (for example) – nor what beauty is. Moreover, "what beauty is" is itself an aesthetic question, whose answer will engage dialectically with the values the philosopher chooses to adopt.

In sum, psychologists can teach us a great deal about creativity. Without them, we cannot understand how it is possible. They can (or rather, they will) explain how novel ideas can arise. They can tell us why certain types of people are motivated to make the effort to produce them and to endure the suspicion and even scorn that often follows. They may even show us some of the evolutionary bases of our natural (precultural) aesthetic responses. Similarly, the art historians and anthropologists can enlighten us about the historical ancestries and cultural varieties involved. But the philosophers of aesthetics will always be needed. For it is their arguments that analyze, and try to justify, the values we adopt, given our particular culture and subculture.

See also Plato (Chapter 1), Medieval aesthetics (Chapter 3), Kant (Chapter 5), Definitions of art (Chapter 21), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Aesthetic universals (Chapter 26), Value of art (Chapter 28), Beauty (Chapter 29).

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43
STYLE

Aaron Meskin

The notion of style plays an important role in a number of disciplines (e.g. anthropology, archeology, art history and publishing) – the theory of art has no monopoly on the concept. In fact, the earliest systematic discussions of style appear in Greek and Roman writings on rhetoric. The term "style" (derived from the Latin word "stilus," which refers to the mechanism used for writing on wax tablets in ancient Rome) is used widely in ordinary discourse to characterize a range of nonaesthetic and non-artistic activities and objects. Nonetheless, style is a central notion in the arts, and it is primarily from the perspective of the arts that it will be discussed in this chapter.

Criticism, history and theory of the arts make reference to a wide range of kinds of style, which may be individuated with respect to the ultimate bearers of the style. *Individual style* (e.g. Vermeer's style, Hitchcock's style) may be distinguished from various forms of *general style*: *historical* or *period style* (e.g. Impressionism, Postimpressionism), *national* and *regional style* (e.g. Russian ballet style, Celtic folk music), *school style* (e.g. in the style of Giotto, the style of the Second Viennese School, the Metaphysical style) and *universal style* (e.g. classicism, naturalism, realism) (Wollheim 1979). There are also *style characteristics* or *style qualities* (e.g. bombast, flamboyance, pretentiousness), which do not, on at least some accounts, amount to full-fledged styles on their own (Walton 1979). And there may even be other distinguishable categories of style such as *genre style* and *the style of a particular work of art* (Carroll 1998).

The aforementioned notions of style seem to serve a wide range of art-critical, art-historical and art-theoretical functions. In particular, style seems to play *identificatory*, *interpretive*, *evaluative* and *explanatory* roles in our artistic practices. This chapter will begin by focusing on those various functions that style is meant to perform. It will conclude with an investigation of some general issues about style: the relationship between style and content, the relationship between style and intention, and the centrality of style to the arts and the aesthetic.

Style and identification

While style and stylistic features are often used to identify the provenance of artworks (i.e. who made them, where and when they were made), not all features that help us identify authorship or origins are matters of style (Goodman 1978; Wollheim 1987).

For example, physical attributes of the materials used in an artwork may be of use in determining its origins, so too may the literal signature of a painter. Nonetheless, these features would not typically be characterized as stylistic. It is useful then to distinguish style from "signature," where the latter concept picks out the features of a work of art that are most useful for establishing provenance.

Goodman (1978: 35) suggests that stylistic features are always relevant to the symbolic functioning of the work while the features that make signature are not. This does seem to exclude features such as the chemical properties of pigments from (ordinarily) counting as stylistic, but it relies on Goodman's tendentious semiotic approach to style and art. An alternative way of distinguishing style from signature is provided by Wollheim (1987: 36). While Wollheim treats individual style as a matter of objective psychological fact, he characterizes signature as consisting in the aspects of an artist's work that are most useful to a connoisseur (or group of connoisseurs) for establishing authorship. If this is right, signature must be understood as being implicitly relativized. On Wollheim's account, then, a given feature may count as both an aspect of signature and as a feature reflective of an artist's individual style.

Despite the distinction between style and signature, it is nonetheless the case that stylistic attribution is often crucial to the determination of provenance. How does style serve this function? Universal style categories might not seem to help much here, since examples of such style categories appear in a wide range of times and places (hence, their universality). But even such style categories may help an art historian narrow down the range of possible origins for a work of art. Not all universal styles have been equally popular at all times and places (nor, certainly, among all artists). And if other style categories involve features that are "characteristic of author, period, place, or school" (Goodman 1978: 35), then the presence of such features may serve as evidence of a work's origins. Of course, such evidence is defeasible. For example, there is always the possibility that a successful forger may deceive even the most careful connoisseur by imitating a style. More generally, a feature (or set of features) may be characteristic of more than one artist, period, place or school.

One complication is that determining the style categories that a work falls into may itself be dependent on background knowledge about the origins of the work. This is because determining the style that a work possesses (and even whether it possesses a style at all) depends, at least in some cases, on establishing its meaning (Robinson 1981). Determining artistic meaning is, in turn, often dependent on background knowledge of the context in which a work was made. One way to see this is to consider the possibility of artistic and nonartistic indiscernibles produced in different contexts (e.g. red squares, objects that look like *Guernica*). On most accounts, such objects could differ with respect to style and even with respect to whether they possess style at all. (But according to Walton 1979: 60, "the style of Pierre Menard's *Don Quixote* is archaic and that of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* is not; yet these works are in the same style.") Determining the style of a particular red square might then require some knowledge of its context of production. But all of this is consistent with the identificatory function of style, since stylistic attribution may in such cases enable the art historian to move from knowledge of very general features of provenance to more specific ones.

Style and interpretation

So interpretation has some bearing on stylistic attribution. What role do style categories and stylistic attributions play in interpretation? For the sake of this discussion, let us treat interpretation broadly so as to include the determination of representational and expressive features of works of art, as well as the determination of more general semantic features such as meaning, purpose and significance. It seems plausible that successful interpretation often depends on stylistic attribution (Robinson 1981).

Panofsky argues that stylistic attribution is essential to the determination of some of the basic representational features of certain paintings (Panofsky 1955: 33–35). Even determining something as (apparently) obvious as the fact that the small child in Roger van der Weyden's *The Vision of the Three Magi* is an apparition requires more than mere "practical experience" – knowledge that the painting is in a realist style is crucial. So practical experience must be informed by "a corrective principle, which may be called the history of styles" (ibid.: 35). Similarly, Walton points out that "a cubist work might look like a person with a cubical head to someone not familiar with the style" (1970: 345). But knowledge of cubism, and the features that are standard to it, will tend to keep one from making the mistake of thinking that Picasso's cubist portraits actually depict people with cubical heads.

What about the expressive features of art? It might seem that our ability to recognize artistic expression has little to do with our knowledge of style categories. But Gombrich makes the plausible suggestion that we will not recognize the "gay abandon" of Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie* unless we know something about his individual style (1960: 369). And Walton offers similar arguments about the role that familiarity with general style categories plays in our detection of the expressive properties of works of art (1970: 347).

Style therefore plays an important role in interpretation. But, as mentioned already, interpretation also plays an important role in stylistic attribution. Does this suggest the existence of a vicious circle? It does not seem so. Robinson suggests that the situation means only that the art historian and art critic need to cooperate in order to "figure out" paintings and that this cooperation may take a variety of forms (1981: 12–14; see also Panofsky 1955: 16, 35).

Style, value and evaluation

Since competently evaluating a meaningful work of art typically requires grasping its meaning, the significant role that stylistic attribution plays in interpretation entails that it will play at least a supporting role in the evaluation of many works of art. But style also plays a more direct role in artistic evaluation.

In common parlance, we often use the term "style" and its cognates as evaluative terms. "He has style" and "she did it with style" are both typically used to express positive evaluation, as is characterizing something or someone as stylish. "It lacks style" and "he has no style" are commonly understood to be criticisms. Of course we also speak of uninteresting and derivative styles. And we criticize things for

exhibiting style without substance. So the mere possession or exhibition of style is not sufficient for overall positive value. In fact, it is not obvious that possession of a style is always any sort of artistic merit (consider those derivative styles). Moreover, as we will see below, the lack of a style is not sufficient for artistic failure, nor is it even always a demerit.

Lang claims that "to find a work without style would ordinarily be a negative and probably decisive judgment" (1998: 320). If one considers the role of individual style in certain Western high-art traditions (in which the development and manifestation of individual style was an important artistic goal), then at least the first part of this claim appears accurate. To characterize a painting as prestylistic or poststylistic is typically to imply a criticism of it. In such cases, the lack of individual style is plausibly a pro tanto demerit (i.e. it is flawed *to the extent that* it lacks individual style). But very often this is not a decisive judgment. Vermeer's early works, arguably produced before he developed any individual style, are recognized to possess significant artistic merit (Gowing 1997: 29). And what about forms of art in which the exhibition of individual style is not a goal or is explicitly rejected? In such cases, the failure to exhibit individual style may not be any sort of flaw, let alone a decisive one.

A natural line of thought is that individual style is an *achievement* or the *embodiment of achievement* and is valuable as such. This fits nicely with some contemporary theories of art that hold that achievement value is an important component of artistic value (Currie 1989: 34–40). Such an account has the resources to explain why the possession of style is typically only a pro tanto merit (and the lack of style only a pro tanto demerit). For while we value many works of art as achievements or embodiments of achievement, we value them for other reasons as well. So the possession of style does not guarantee that a work of art has an overall positive aesthetic value, nor does the lack of individual style entail that a work will have overall negative value. In fact, the absence of individual style may be irrelevant to the value of some forms of art that eschew the value of achievement. (Duchamp's ready-mades may be an example of this.)

While individual style may then be directly relevant to artistic value, it is not clear whether general style categories can be relevant in quite the same way. Gombrich claims that the style categories used in art history originally "derive from normative contexts" (1968: 354). But while this is true of many period style categories ("Gothic," "baroque," "mannerist" and "rococo" all initially had negative connotations), these categories no longer appear to have any normative dimension. Nor does Gombrich's claim seem true of all the myriad of style categories bequeathed to us by the twentieth century. In general, normative conceptions of style (and stylistic development) are largely dismissed in contemporary discussion. As Schapiro suggests, the dominant contemporary view is that no style is intrinsically better than any other and that "perfect art is possible in any subject matter or style" (1994: 57–58).

If general style categories (e.g. period styles) were thought of as individual style writ large (as they were in the traditional physiognomic theories of style), they might be thought of as the achievements of periods, regions, peoples or cultures, and valued thusly. Contemporary thought, however, is generally quite skeptical of this approach for reasons that will be discussed later in this chapter. General style categories may nonetheless play an important evaluative role because (1) competent evaluation of a work of art *as art* may require knowledge of (and experience with) the

style categories to which it belongs (Walton 1970; Currie 1989); and (2) we are also interested in evaluating works as examples of the style categories to which they belong (Lang 1998: 321). So it is not merely having individual style that is relevant to evaluation, it is also the particular general style(s) that a work manifests which are evaluatively relevant.

Style as an explanatory notion

As mentioned earlier, many traditional approaches to style treated general style categories as fundamentally akin to individual style. For example, physiognomic approaches treated general style as expressive of the character or personality of cultures or peoples, just as individual style is often treated as the expression of the personality of the individual artist (Schapiro 1994: 90–91, and Gombrich 1968: 358–59, criticize these approaches). On such an account, general styles are as real and robust as individual style. But in a series of quite influential works on style and the pictorial arts, Richard Wollheim (1979, 1987, 1995) has argued that there is a fundamental distinction between individual style and various forms of general style. The core of the putative difference is that individual style has "psychological reality" and, hence, is an explanatory notion, while general style categories are purely "taxonomic" (Wollheim 1979: 134–35). That is, general style categories are simply "shorthand for a set of characteristics which we and those who share our outlook find particularly interesting, arresting, innovatory, in that stretch of painting" (Wollheim 1987: 26) and, hence, they lack any capacity to explain.

For Wollheim, individual style is a matter of the way a particular artist works. In the case of painting, it is a matter of the "processes or operations characteristic of his acting as a painter" (Wollheim 1979: 135). So talk of individual style is not merely a convenient way of picking out features typically found in an artist's work; rather, it is a way of referring to the processes that give rise to those features. And because individual style is not identical to any set of features but, instead, causes those features, we may explain why particular works of art look the way they do by reference to it.

This is certainly an attractive conception of individual style. But why does Wollheim believe that general style is fundamentally different – that it is purely taxonomic, lacks explanatory power and, in some sense, "lacks reality" (1995: 47)? Perhaps the fact that traditional approaches to general style categories were committed to the possibility of groups of people (e.g. nations, races) having character or personality is a relevant factor. For example, Wölfflin invokes differences in "national feeling" and "national psychology of form" to explain differences between Dutch and Flemish art (1950: 9). Perhaps some of the contemporary skepticism about the reality of general style categories is implicitly rooted in the unpleasantness (and implausibility) of notions like national and racial character.

More explicitly, Wollheim notes, as others have before (e.g. Gombrich 1968; Schapiro 1994), that general style categories are unstable. Developments in art history led to changes in the features that are associated with particular general style categories and to corresponding stylistic reclassifications of artworks. This seems to

be the prime source of his skepticism about general style categories. But this argument from disagreement does not give us reason to accept relativism about the attribution of general style categories nor should it lead us to believe that such categories are unreal. For it is plausible that some instability with respect to style can be explained by reference to epistemic limitations on the part of groups of critics and art historians. Another explanation for the instability of general style appeals only to the varying interests of different critics – perhaps critics are simply guilty of focusing on different subsets of the wide range of stable features that are associated with general style categories.

Moreover, we need not think of group character or personality in order to make sense of real, nonrelativized and fully explanatory general style categories. Consider period styles such as Impressionism, cubism and fauvism. On Wollheim's view, there is nothing to these styles over and above the characteristics that particular art critics and art historians find of interest in a group of paintings. But this seems wrong – it seems possible for a group of critics or art historians to be wrong with respect to the attribution of a period style category and, perhaps more significantly, they may also be wrong with respect to the features they associate with a given style. A taxonomic approach does not appear to have the resources to explain these phenomena.

What then could be the basis of general style categories? It is plausible that artists working in such styles can be said to be working in shared practices or traditions – their art-making is governed by various shared norms. If this is right, then such general style categories need not be thought of as simply shorthand for various characteristics of interest to critics and historians; rather, legitimate general stylistic attribution may be underwritten by the shared norms that govern the art-making practices of particular groups. General style categories may, then, be socially real and hence serve explanatory functions. Perhaps art criticism and art history make use of both sorts of general style categories – taxonomic categories as well as socially real ones.

Style, form and content

Style is sometimes thought of as something superficial (consider the aforementioned phrase "style versus substance"), and this view may be associated with the temptation to think that style and content are fundamentally distinct. The commonplace that style is not a matter of what is said but how something is said, as well as the thought that style rests on the possibility of synonymy (Ullman 1964; Gombrich 1968), further suggest this. It certainly seems to be the case that two works of art may possess the same style even though they differ with respect to content, meaning or subject matter. Furthermore, two works may have the same subject matter (perhaps even have the same meaning) and yet they may differ with respect to style. Of course, this does not imply that style and content are utterly distinct. All these cases show is that style is neither identical with, nor determined by, aspects of content. Nonetheless, it may be tempting to associate style with form as opposed to content.

However, there are a number of criticisms that have been lodged against views that style and content are fundamentally distinct (see Goodman 1978: 23–27). And there seem to be clear cases in which content, meaning and subject matter count as

aspects of style. As Goodman puts it: "part of a poet's style … may consist of what he says – of whether he focuses on the fragile and transcendent or the powerful and enduring, upon sensory qualities or abstract ideas, and so on" (1978: 26). In fact, it is plausible that "*anything* can be an element of individual style" (Robinson 1984: 148).

If this is right, then there are reasons to think that content can be relevant to style. So it looks as if a purely formalist conception of style is misguided. One caveat: it is not at all clear that a proper conception of form can itself ignore representational elements (and content in general). If artistic form itself must be understood as involving content, then some other argument would be needed to scotch a formalist conception of style. But it is plausible that style could still be distinguished from form by requiring that the former must involve some sort of regular occurrence not required by the latter.

Style, intention, act and object

Is style essentially an intentional notion, that is, can something utterly unrelated to intentional agency have a style (or be in a style)? It is natural to associate style categories with intentional agency, and this is explicitly built into some definitions of style (Gombrich 1968). But Goodman suggests that we may want to attribute styles to purely natural events; for example, he offers "a sunrise in Mandalay style" as an example of the attribution of style to a natural object (1978: 36). Walton suggests that natural objects in "unusual cases" may (derivatively) possess style (1979: 46). While Goodman is right to point the appropriateness of some such usages, it is likely that such attributions of style are metaphoric or that it is sometimes appropriate to treat (and talk about) natural objects *as if* they had a style. We will, therefore, assume that style has an essential link to intentional agency.

The question of the relationship between style and intention is intimately related to the question of the appropriate objects of stylistic attribution. If the above suggestion is right, merely natural objects are not suitable for literal stylistic attribution. Nevertheless, we seem to attribute style to a range of things belonging to very different categories: *artifacts* (e.g. paintings, dresses, haircuts), *actions* (e.g. ways of walking, talking and acting) and *persons* (e.g. "she has style") (Walton 1979: 45–46).

In fact, Walton suggests that an object possesses style in virtue of the style of the actions that are involved in its making (or that appear to be involved in its making). This line of thinking leads on toward what Jacquette refers to as a "pragmatic" approach to style – one that focuses on "how things are done" (2000: 461). In any case, it seems that both products and processes may literally possess styles, although the styles possessed by the former may be dependent on the styles of the latter. And attribution of styles to persons may also depend on actions, since they are plausibly rooted in dispositions to behave in certain ways.

How tight is the link between intentions and style? In particular, what role do an artist's actual intentions play in determining the style categories that his or her work falls into? Some traditional views, which link style essentially to artistic choice (e.g. Gombrich 1968), seem to imply a very tight connection between actual intentions and style, and Wollheim's (1979, 1987, 1995) psychological account of individual

style is profoundly intentionalistic. Walton (1970) argues that artists' intentions are one among a number of factors relevant to categorization. Unsurprisingly, given his nonintentional general theory of art, Goodman (1978) rejects any intentional criteria for the attributions of style. Intriguingly, given his generally intentionalist leanings, Danto seems to discount intentions when it comes to the attribution of both general style categories and some characteristics of individual style (Danto 1964, 1991; see Carroll 1995 for criticism).

An alternative to actual intentionalism and anti-intentionalism can be found in Robinson's work on literary style. Robinson argues that literary style is a matter of the "relatively consistent" way in which an author performs various literary activities and, thereby, expresses his or her personality (1985: 230). Nonetheless, she evades traditional (actual) intentionalism in favor of a version of hypothetical intentionalism. What a literary style expresses is not, according to her, typically the personality of the actual artist; instead, it is the personality of an implied artist – "the author as she seems to be from the evidence of the work" (ibid.: 234). What pushes Robinson to this conclusion? One consideration seems to be the conspicuous mismatch between the personality traits apparently expressed by certain literary works and the actual personalities of their authors. Such a mismatch suggests that the personality expressed by the style of a literary work is not, in fact, that of the author, but rather the personality of its implied or hypothetical author. There is certainly room to be skeptical of this argument, even if one accepts this sort of character-based approach to individual style – perhaps some authors express *aspects* of their personalities in writing that they do not express in other contexts.

The importance of style

How important is the notion of style to the arts? We have seen that it plays an important role in a wide range of art-related activities. Does it play an essential role? Wollheim claims that the possession of an individual style is a "precondition for aesthetic interest" (1979: 133) and that it is a necessary condition for a painter being an artist (1987: 26), but there are reasons to be skeptical of both of these claims.

Appreciating natural and artifactual objects for their beauty is a paradigm of aesthetic interest, but the possession of beauty does not presuppose the possession of style. Nor does our appreciation of beauty depend upon attributing style categories (or even past experience attributing style categories). Style plays an important aesthetic role, but it is not at the root of all aesthetic experience.

Since there are works of art that appear to lack individual style (e.g. the prestylistic work of some great painters), it is hard to see why the development of individual style should count as a requirement for being an artist, although it might be a requirement for being a good artist of a certain sort. But consider also the work of contemporary artists who employ techniques (e.g. aleatoric strategies) that are expressly designed to subvert the attribution of individual style.

It is plausible that all nonuniversal style categories involve features that are characteristic or relatively consistent, so the fact of limited production may preclude style. For example, an individual who produces only one work of art might not be able to

develop an individual style (since there would be no features characteristic of his or her work). Similarly, if there are no features characteristic of the art of an era or place, then period style, national style and regional style will also be precluded.

How important is the concept of style for the practice of art history? Ackerman argues that the concept of style "provides a structure" for art history and, although other structures are possible (e.g. the life of the individual artist), the structure provided by style is the most "comprehensive" (1962: 227). On the other hand, Schapiro claims that style is an "essential object of investigation" for the art historian (1994: 51). This latter claim seems a bit strong in light of contemporary developments in art and art history, but it would be an anemic art history indeed that made no reference whatsoever to style categories.

And it is not at all clear that art criticism would even be possible without the attribution of style categories; if there were such a thing, it would be very different than the sort of criticism we actually have. As we have seen above, it is plausible that interpretation and evaluation of much art depends on stylistic attribution. If this is right, then, insofar as art criticism is concerned with the interpretation and evaluation of such art, it will make reference to style.

See also Nietzsche (Chapter 8), Formalism (Chapter 9), Foucault (Chapter 16), Wollheim (Chapter 20), Aesthetic universals (Chapter 26), Value of art (Chapter 28), Interpretation (Chapter 30), Creativity (Chapter 42).

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44
AUTHENTICITY IN PERFORMANCE

James O. Young

The concept of authenticity

In the last decades of the twentieth century, authenticity became an end valued by many performing artists and audiences. Authentic performance could be a goal in any performing art: drama, dance or music. The authentic performance of music has, however, generated the most attention. The so-called "early music movement" is responsible for a phenomenal growth of interest in the authentic performance of music. This movement is one of the most striking developments in the history of music performance and amounts to little less than a revolution in musical taste. The interest of artists and audiences in authenticity led philosophers to reflect on the concept of authentic performance, particularly as it applies to music.

Authenticity in performance became an issue because modern performances of old works often differ dramatically from the original performances. Consider, for example, an eighteenth-century performance of a composition by Bach and some modern performances of the same work. The musical instruments of the eighteenth century differ dramatically from the instruments of our time. For example, baroque violins were strung in gut, were played with short, convex bows and had fingerboards shorter than those on modern instruments. Consequently, the sound of a baroque violin differs markedly from the sound of a modern instrument. Performance practices have also changed. While players of modern violins use almost continuous vibrato, most eighteenth-century violinists used it only sparingly, as a special effect. As a result a modern performance of a work by Bach can sound quite unlike an eighteenth-century performance. Significant changes have also taken place in dramatic performance. In Shakespeare's day, for example, males took all dramatic roles. Boys acted the parts of women. This article will focus on the authentic performance of music.

In recent years, talk about historically authentic performance has fallen out of fashion among members of the early music movement. Likely this is because performers of early music have come to have doubts about whether authentic, or completely authentic performances, are attainable. As a result, talk about authenticity has been replaced by talk about historically informed performance (HIP). References to authenticity are often in scare quotes: "authenticity." (See, for example, Kelly 2011.)

Peter Kivy has expressed doubt about whether there is more than a terminological difference between authentic and historically informed performance (Kivy 2002). Stephen Davies has similarly maintained that nothing is to be gained by abandoning talk of authenticity (Davies 2001: 208). Some members of the early music movement see a link between the concepts of authenticity and HIP. Bruce Haynes, a distinguished performer on baroque oboe, writes that, "[a]uthenticity is … central to the concept called HIP" (Haynes 2007: 10). Whatever it is called, members of the early music movement have a goal in performing that is not possessed, or possessed to a smaller degree, by other ("mainstream") musicians. This goal might as well be called authenticity.

Members of the early music movement have variously characterized their goal. Ton Koopman, the distinguished harpsichordist, organist and leader of the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, states the goal of the early music movement in these terms: "In the context of early music, the meaning of the word 'authenticity' is clear: the performance of music on period instruments, using rules of performance practice from that same period, according to the ideas developed at that time as skillfully and as accurately as possible" (Koopman 1987: 2). More recently, Thomas Forrest Kelly, a past president of Early Music America, has written that members of the movement have "all sought a kind of authenticity, a contract with the music that made no apologies, made no adjustments, and tried to hear it as those for whom it was intended might have heard it" (Kelly 2011: 95). The role of the philosopher is to attempt to capture precisely what is meant by these and other accounts of authenticity and to reflect on other philosophical issues that arise from talk about authenticity.

The first philosophical issue is a conceptual issue. We need to analyze the concept of authentic performance and decide what counts as an authentic performance. Once authentic performance is defined, questions emerge about the value of such performances. We need to ask whether reasons can be given for thinking authentic performances are aesthetically superior to inauthentic ones. Moral issues also arise. Perhaps moral reasons can be given for or against the authentic performance of some works. These normative and definitional issues are intertwined and cannot be completely separated.

We should begin an analysis of the concept of authentic performance by identifying the desiderata that a good definition of the concept will satisfy. For a start, we do not want a stipulative definition of authentic performance. Rather, a good definition will capture and refine what members of the early music movement mean when they talk about authenticity. A good definition of authentic performance will also represent it as a goal that performing artists can attain, at least some of the time and to a large extent. Finally, authentic performance should be characterized in such a way that it represents an attractive aesthetic goal. That is, authenticity is supposed to be an aesthetic good and, if possible, it should be defined in a way that it is represented as such. We cannot rule out the possibility that no definition can satisfy all of these desiderata.

Before we can proceed with the examination of these proposals, a couple of preliminary points should be made. For a start, we need to consider the requirement that authentic performance be defined in a way that authentic performances are attainable. This requirement should not be applied too strictly. Each definition of

authenticity establishes a goal for performers. No matter which definition is adopted, our ignorance of parts of history may make these goals unattainable in some cases. This is most obviously true in the cases of works that are lost or partially lost. Modern performers cannot give a completely authentic performance of an incomplete work. (Musicians could, fortuitously, play all the notes in an incomplete work, but this would not be an authentic performance of the work. As we will see, authenticity involves fidelity to something in the past and accidental reproduction of a work is not such fidelity.) Even when scores survive, authentic performances may not be possible. We may be too ignorant of the performance practices of certain periods (the early Middle Ages, for example) for the authentic performance of some works to be attainable. The fact that authenticity is not always achievable should not be taken to establish that the concept of authentic performance has no application. Authenticity should, however, be defined in such a way that it is a goal performers can reasonably hope to achieve on a regular basis. Fortunately, our musicological knowledge is quite good and such a definition should be available.

The second preliminary point identifies the sort of authenticity we are trying to define. The authenticity of concern to the early music movement is "historical authenticity." This sort of authenticity is to be contrasted with "personal authenticity." A personally authentic performance is faithful to a performer's individual genius. That is, a performance characterized by personal authenticity is not a slavish recapitulation of another performance. Rather, it is the product of a performer's individual interpretation. Historical authenticity involves fidelity to something historical. As we will see, different accounts are given of the item to which historically authentic performances are faithful.

It has been suggested that performances cannot be both personally and historically authentic (Kivy 1995: 138–42). In fact, there is no necessary incompatibility. For a start, every performance of an existing work, even the most personally authentic, is historically authentic to some degree. (Without some degree of fidelity to the past, a performance could not be a performance of an existing work.) Even a high degree of historical authenticity is, however, compatible with personal authenticity. The two sorts of authenticity are only incompatible if historical authenticity demands a fidelity that is imitation of some past performance. Historical authenticity can, however, be defined in such a way that performers have scope for individual creativity. (In practice, the trend in the early music movement is towards increasingly individual, even outré, performances.) Given such a definition, work can be highly historically authentic and personally authentic. To the extent that creativity in performance is an aesthetic good, a satisfactory definition of historical authenticity will not demand complete fidelity to past performances. (For the rest of this chapter, talk of authenticity is talk of historical authenticity, unless otherwise specified.)

The key to defining authenticity is specifying the sort of thing to which a historically authentic performance is faithful. Three main proposals have been presented. According to the first proposal, an authentic performance is one faithful to the sound of performances at the time of composition. (This version of the proposal applies only to the performance of music. If it were extended to cover opera and drama, it would also have to mention fidelity to how performances looked.) The above passage from Kelly (2011) suggests such an approach to authenticity. Alternatively, an

authentic performance of a work is one faithful to the intentions of the work's composer (or author). The third proposal suggests that the authentic performance of a work involves fidelity to a score and the performance practices employed at the time of the work's composition.

The acoustic definition of authenticity

Let us begin by considering authenticity as fidelity to the sounds of past performances. I will call this the "acoustic definition" of authenticity. Fidelity to past sounds can be understood in two senses. In the first sense, an authentic performance reproduces audible phenomena of the past. That is, an authentic performance reproduces vibrations of the air of the type that occurred in the past (by the means originally employed). Kivy (1995) calls this "sonic authenticity." Alternatively, performers could aim at the reproduction of the sort of experience possessed by past audiences. Authenticity would then be defined in terms of the faithful reproduction of past experience (by the means originally employed). Again following Kivy, we can call this "sensible authenticity."

A definition of authenticity in terms of fidelity to past sounds, however this is understood, faces difficulties. An immediate problem faces the acoustic definition, however fidelity to past sounds is understood. Some compositions were never performed. As a result, there are no past sounds to which present performances of these works can be faithful. Consequently, the acoustic definition leads to the conclusion that authentic performances of works not performed in the past are impossible. This seems to be an unacceptable consequence. The acoustic definition can be modified to avoid it, however. The definition's advocates could hold that when a composition was not performed in the past, authenticity is to be defined counterfactually. That is, an authentic performance of a previously unperformed work would be a performance which sounds as the work would have sounded, had it been performed at the time of its composition. The acoustic definition faces other, more serious problems. In particular, questions arise about whether sonic and sensible authenticity represent attractive and attainable aesthetic goals.

Consider first sonic authenticity. Sonic authenticity will often be attainable. Whether it represents an attractive goal is, however, open to question. Performance standards have varied over time and performers sometimes did not do justice to works at the time of their composition. If modern performers can produce better performances, sonic authenticity is not always an attractive aesthetic goal. (The reproduction of past vibrations of the air might have historical value, but authenticity is intended as an aesthetic end.) Sometimes, of course, sonic authenticity is desirable. For example, Bach was the supreme interpreter of his own keyboard works and the reproduction of the sound of his performances (were it possible) would be of enormous aesthetic value. Authenticity should, however, be defined in such a way that it is an aesthetically valuable goal in performances of all valuable works. Notice that this version of the acoustic approach results in a definition of historical authenticity according to which it is incompatible with personal authenticity. This is the case since performers aim to replicate a past performance, rather than to develop an original interpretation.

Questions arise about both the attainability and attractiveness of sensible authenticity. For a start, sharing the experience of past audiences is not always an attractive aesthetic goal. Any time sonic authenticity is aesthetically undesirable, sensible authenticity would also be undesirable. After all, sharing the experience of someone who heard a bad performance is not appealing. Even when past performances were good, sensible authenticity is not always desirable. Audiences in the past did not always experience works as aesthetically valuable. For example, many of Beethoven's first audiences found his works uncouth and bombastic. The second version of the acoustic definition could be revised in an effort to deal with this difficulty. The definition could incorporate a reference to selected audience members. For example, some members of Beethoven's audience (including, presumably, Beethoven himself) had an aesthetically valuable experience of original performances of his works. Sharing the experience of such listeners would be attractive. Still, it is doubtful whether sensible authenticity is a universally attractive aesthetic goal.

Doubts have also been raised about whether sensible authenticity is attainable. Members of modern audiences and members of past audiences have had very different sorts of experience. Our experience and, in particular, our experience of music is bound to influence how compositions sound to us. For example, many modern listeners are raised on Beethoven's music and the works of later composers. As a result, it has been argued, we cannot hear his works as shocking, even bizarre, as contemporaries did. It would follow that sensible authenticity is not an attainable goal. This objection can be challenged on a number of grounds. One could question whether musical experience has changed so very much or suggest that our imaginations make it possible to recapture past experience. Still, enough doubts have been raised about the various versions of acoustic authenticity to motivate the search for an alternative definition.

Stephen Davies (1987) has advocated an idealized version of acoustic authenticity. On his view, an authentic performance of a work is one that sounds as it would have sounded at the time of composition, had conditions been optimal for the time. Conditions have not always been ideal. For example, when Mozart's musicians performed the overture to *Don Giovanni* at first sight the conditions were not anything like optimal. According to Davies, an authentic performance of this work should not be understood in terms of fidelity to this performance. Rather, he holds, an authentic performance of the overture is one that sounds as it would have sounded in 1787, had Mozart had at his disposal good, well-rehearsed musicians, playing good instruments. (Here, "good" is understood as "good by the standards of 1787.") Davies's definition of acoustic authenticity is much preferable to versions that do not idealize the sound to which authentic performances are faithful. So long as it is understood that an ideal performance is a personally authentic one, it seems to meet all of the desiderata listed earlier.

The intentional definition of authenticity

Consider next the definition of an authentic performance of a work as a performance that sounds (and, in the case of opera, drama and dance, looks) as its composer intended. I will refer to this as the "intentional definition." This definition faces some

troublesome questions. The definition appears to capture what many performers of early music mean when they talk about authenticity. Whether it actually does, however, depends on what a composer's intentions for his work are taken to be. A question also arises about whether fidelity to composers' intentions is always aesthetically desirable. Consider the intentions a composer may have had. At first, determining a composer's intentions for the performance of his works seems easy enough. The score will reveal a good deal about a composer's intentions. For example, Bach's score explicitly states that the *Goldberg Variations* are to be performed on a harpsichord with two keyboards. Information about the performance practices of the time will also reveal a great deal. Composers probably intended that their works be performed on the instruments of their time and in the contemporary style. A composer may, however, have had other intentions. He or she may have intended that the works be performed on the most modern instruments available. Some composers may have considered that future performers would develop interpretations of their works that had not occurred to them. They may have intended that, if such interpretations were aesthetically successful, they should be employed.

Suppose that some composers intended that the latest musical style be employed in the performance of their works. Or suppose they intended that their works be performed on the most modern (or the loudest) instruments available. (Beethoven may have had such an intention for some of his piano works.) If some composers had such intentions, fidelity to their intentions will not result in what many people regard as historically authentic performances of their works. Certainly fidelity to such intentions will not result in performances such as those sought by members of the early music movement. Consequently, a definition of authenticity in terms of composers' intentions fails to meet the first desideratum.

There are other reasons to reject the intentional definition. Suppose that we could be certain that a composer only intended a work to be performed in a certain style and on the instruments of the day. The question of whether fidelity to these intentions is aesthetically desirable still arises. Sometimes fidelity is aesthetically desirable. A composer will often be the best interpreter of his or her works. Composers who were great virtuosi, such as Bach and Handel, probably were. These performers also chose the instruments best suited to their compositions. In such cases, fidelity to a composer's intentions is probably the best aesthetic policy. (We should not be surprised if Bach's keyboard works sound better on harpsichord than on modern piano.) Modern performers may, however, have developed interpretations of some works that are superior to the interpretations intended by the composer. Here fidelity to a composer's intentions is not desirable. That is, authenticity, construed as fidelity to a composer's intentions, is not a characteristic of the best performances of some works.

There may be reasons, besides aesthetic reasons, for respecting composers' intentions. Kivy (1993) once believed that performers are under a moral obligation to respect composers' intentions. Performers could be under such an obligation even when fidelity to a composer's intentions results in performances less aesthetically good than ones that result from infidelity. Some people maintain, for example, that the dead can be harmed. If so, one could argue that disregard for a composer's intentions is objectionably harmful. Alternatively, one could argue that an obligation to

respect composers' intentions follows from the fact that living composers are harmed if they know that, in the future, their wishes are likely to be ignored. Still another moral argument for respecting composers' intentions starts from the premise that composers make their works available to the public on the understanding that their intentions will be respected.

Even if it is accepted that performers can have a moral obligation to respect composers' intentions, respect for composers' intentions may not always be morally obligatory. Other moral considerations may override an obligation to respect these intentions. Sometimes respecting a composer's intentions will obviously be immoral. This will be the case when the composer intends that an aria be sung by castrati. (If a boy is accidentally castrated, he should be given hormone therapy, not singing lessons.) One could also argue that performers have the right to interpret works freely. The interests of audiences also enter into moral questions about performance. Consequentialists could argue that an audience's interest in hearing the best possible performances could override a composer's interest in having his intentions respected. They might reason that any harm to a composer is more than outweighed by harm to audiences denied access to the best possible performances.

The technique definition of authenticity

One definition of authenticity remains to be considered. According to this definition, an authentic performance of a work is faithful to the work's score and to the performance practices employed at the time of the work's composition. More precisely, on this definition an authentic performance is faithful to the performance practices that affect the sound of performances. This qualification must be added since some performance practices (for example, the use of walking sticks as batons) have no impact on sound, so there is no aesthetic reason to observe them. This definition may be referred to as the "technique definition" since an authentic performance is the product of a certain sort of practice or technique. So, for example, an authentic performance of one of Handel's trio sonatas will be faithful to the urtext. Just as importantly, it will be faithful to the performance practices of Handel's time. It will employ baroque violins, accompanied by a continuo group that will include instruments such as baroque cello, viola da gamba, harpsichord and other baroque instruments. The tempi will be rather quicker than is common in nonauthentic performances, sparing use will be made of vibrato, but other ornaments will be improvised and so on.

The technique definition incorporates some of the best features of the other two. On this view, an authentic performance is not the reproduction of the sound of a past performance. When fidelity to scores and performance practices is the touchstone of authenticity, however, a good authentic performance will sound something like an ideal performance would have sounded at the time of composition. Something of the intentional definition is also preserved, since fidelity to a score involves fidelity to a composer's intentions. Fidelity to performance practices also involves respect for composers' intentions, since composers often intend their works to be performed in accordance with the practices of their period. As well, composers' intentions, in part, determine the performance practices of a period. Consequently, fidelity to past performance practices involves fidelity to composers' intentions.

If the technique definition is accepted, an authentic performance leaves scope for performers' creativity. Two performances can be equally faithful to some score (particularly scores of the eighteenth century and earlier) but quite different from each other. Fidelity to the performance practices of a period also leaves performers the freedom to cultivate individual interpretations of compositions. Consequently, on the technique definition, a performance can be both historically and personally authentic. Indeed, historical authenticity will sometimes require personal authenticity. This will be the case, for example, when a composer directs in the score that performances of a work include an improvised cadenza.

The technique definition and Davies's idealized acoustic definition are extensionally equivalent. That is, they classify as authentic the same class of performances. The technique definition is, perhaps, preferable because it makes clear that a performance can be both historically and personally authentic. Since statements about counterfactual states of affairs (for example, about how music would have sounded, had conditions been ideal) are the source of considerable philosophical controversy, the technique definition also has the advantage of avoiding reference to such states of affairs.

The technique definition easily meets two of the three desiderata identified earlier. Performers of early music often carefully study urtexts and aim to revive the performance practices of the past. So the technique definition captures a good deal of what performers mean when they speak of authenticity. The second desideratum is also met since the goal established by the technique definition can often be attained. Many scores survive together with instructions for their performance. Our knowledge of the instruments of many periods is quite good and instruments are often the best guides to past performance practices. Surviving performance manuals provide valuable insight into the performance practices of the past and musicologists have discovered a great deal of additional evidence.

Are authentic performances aesthetically desirable?

Suppose that the technique definition of authenticity is accepted. We still need to ask whether the technique definition establishes authenticity as a desirable aesthetic goal. Before we can answer this question, we need to ask how we can tell whether authenticity (as defined by the technique definition) is an aesthetic good. One way to decide the question would be empirical. Imagine the following experiment. Authentic and inauthentic performances of works are recorded. The authentic and inauthentic performances are by equally good musicians. Qualified audiences are then presented with two recordings of a given work, one authentic and one inauthentic. (There will, of course, be some question about what counts as a qualified audience member.) If these audiences prefer authentic performances to the inauthentic ones, then authenticity is an aesthetic good. The experiment just described has, in effect, been carried out on a massive scale over the past few decades. The results of this experiment are inconclusive.

Qualified listeners give different verdicts on authentic performances. (Some dogmatic observers on both sides of the question hold that the truly qualified listeners are unanimous. I will disregard this possibility.) Some qualified audience members

report that they prefer authentic performances. They often note that authentic performances are characterized by a greater clarity than inauthentic ones. For example, Bach's counterpoint emerges more clearly on a harpsichord than on a modern piano. Other listeners admire the wider range of tone colors offered by baroque instruments. Still others prefer authentic performances because the style of performance matches the style of composition. For example, performances of baroque compositions in a baroque style may be unified in a way that a performance of the same work in a Romantic style is not. Some qualified audience members, however, do not value fidelity to period performance practices. They prefer the lush, full sound of modern instruments. The tone of a fortepiano, for example, might seem feeble when compared to that of a concert grand. Some listeners also prefer the big sound of modern orchestras to the more intimate sound of small baroque ensembles. A third segment of the qualified audience is happy to listen to good authentic and good inauthentic performances. These listeners are indifferent about historical authenticity and simply seek out personally authentic performances.

Even given this lack of unanimity among qualified audiences, one conclusion can be drawn. Authenticity, as defined by the technique definition, is an aesthetic good. At any rate, it is an aesthetic good on the assumption that if listeners seek something out, then it is (for them) good. On this account, however, the aesthetic value of authenticity is relative to the preferences of some listeners. Some people are dissatisfied with this relativism and inclined to search for a way to establish that either authentic or inauthentic performances are more aesthetically valuable. The case for such a claim will depend on the resolution of a long-standing debate about what makes one performance or interpretation of a work better than another. Still, given one resolution to this debate, it is possible to sketch a line of argument for the conclusion that, all other factors being equal, an authentic performance is superior to an inauthentic one.

The debate in question concerns whether or not music has content, or whether it is aesthetically valuable only as pure musical form. If formalism provides the correct account of aesthetic value of musical performance, there seems to be no reason to favor authentic performances over less authentic ones. An inauthentic performance can have a beautiful form just as easily as an authentic one can. Not coincidentally Kivy, an adherent of formalism, sees no value in authenticity as an aesthetic goal. Suppose, however, that music can have content. That is, suppose that it can express or represent nonmusical phenomena such as emotions. If music has such content, an argument suggests itself for saying that authentic performances are more aesthetically valuable than inauthentic ones.

The expressive qualities of a work of music depend in large measure on how it is performed. Consider, for example, sonatas of the seventeenth century. In the seventeenth century, pitches were up to a full tone or more below modern concert pitch. When a work of the period is performed at the lower pitch, it often displays an expressive character it lacks in inauthentic performances. It becomes expressive of emotions that it does not express at modern pitch. When the composer wrote the piece he or she (presumably) took into account the pitch of the period. If audiences are interested in discerning the content of a work as originally composed, they will prefer authentic performances of seventeenth-century sonatas. There is always the

chance that new and aesthetically valuable content will be added in an inauthentic performance of some work, but particularly in the cases of works by great composers, audiences can reasonably expect the best aesthetic reward from access to the original content of a work.

See also Ontology of art (Chapter 23), Value of art (Chapter 28), Interpretation (Chapter 30), Fakes and forgeries (Chapter 45), Music (Chapter 61).

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Further reading

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45
FAKES AND FORGERIES

Nan Stalnaker

Underlying much discussion of forgery is this question: Why do people prefer a genuine work of art to a copy when they cannot tell the difference between the two? To put the question in its strongest form, suppose not just the average viewer, but even the greatest experts will never be able to see any difference between them. In this case, could there possibly be a justification to prefer the original work?

Some people claim that the reasons to prefer the original are not aesthetic but moral: because exact copies are easily mistaken for originals they can be used to deceive. But the moral explanation cannot account for why we prefer to see the original even when there is no deception involved, that is, when the copy is clearly labeled as such. (From here on a nondeceptive copy will be called a "fake," to distinguish it from a "forgery," which is intended to deceive.) If, to accommodate the crowds, the *Mona Lisa* and a high-quality, clearly labeled copy were hanging in different parts of the Louvre, most of us would still choose to line up in front of the real thing; what seems odd is that we would do so even though we wouldn't be able to tell if the works were switched.

The appearance theory and the contextualist rebuttal

In resorting to the moral (nonaesthetic) explanation for the preference for originals, it is assumed that there could not possibly be any aesthetic grounds for such a preference. Underlying this assumption is the "appearance theory," the view that the aesthetic value of an artwork depends "solely on the visual appearance of the painting" (Meiland 1983: 116). This view, however, is not so obviously true as it may seem; those who reject it claim that a work's aesthetic interest depends not just on appearance but also on how an art object was made, when, by whom and for what cultural purpose. Richard Wollheim has more recently argued against a general version of the appearance theory, which applies to literature and music as well as to paintings. What he calls the "Scrutiny Thesis" is the view that to evaluate a work of art we should not draw on external, contextual or cultural knowledge, but confine ourselves to direct examination of an artwork, whether looking at, listening to or reading it (Wollheim 1993a: 132–33).

The appearance theory is associated with the formalism of the early twentieth-century art critics Clive Bell and Roger Fry. Enthusiastic about abstract painting,

they claimed that an artwork's aesthetic interest derives entirely from abstract features of its appearance, such as a painting's line, color and spatial organization (Bell 1992: 123–24). This led Bell to claim that the aesthetic response is independent of all knowledge of the world a viewer brings to a work. If this is so, the fact that a work is a forgery or a fake could not possibly affect its aesthetic value. But this would mean that our response to one of the late, near-formless Monet paintings of water lilies would be the same whether we recognized it as a picture of water lilies or mistook it for an abstract work. Given how dramatically the spatial experience changes when we do come to recognize the flowers, this seems implausible. Because figurative content has such a powerful impact, few accept Bell's extreme formalism. Bell's account was nonetheless notable as an attempt to distinguish features that are universally part of the appearance of a work of art (abstract shapes, lines and colors) from features that vary depending on external or contextual knowledge (everything else including figurative content). If we decide that Bell's account of a work's universal content is too narrow, then we face the problem of where else to draw a line between what anyone would perceive regardless of cultural context and what is perceived only with certain background knowledge. To those in a desert culture who have never seen a water lily or a Monet painting, a late Monet work might well appear abstract without added background information. For those who are steeped in Monet and his culture, the flowers are discovered simply by looking.

Contextualist arguments against the appearance theory come in two main varieties. One variety, the kind Wollheim espouses, claims broadly that all perception (aesthetic or not) is shaped by what the perceiver knows. Another variety points to specific features that do not affect the way a painting looks, but that do affect its aesthetic value, such as the originality of a work.

The value of originality

Those who claim that originality has aesthetic value have an apparently simple explanation for why copies, which evidently lack originality, are not as highly prized as genuine works. The claim that originality has aesthetic value is incompatible with the appearance theory insofar as it attributes aesthetic value to the historical properties of a painting, properties we cannot see by looking at it.

The contextualist needs to show, however, that the value of originality is specifically an *aesthetic* value. The appearance theory does not claim that an artwork doesn't have other kinds of value attached to it – historical or cultural or intellectual; rather it suggests that the term "aesthetic" be restricted to values that we discern by means of our perceptual experience of a work, not by what we know about its historical importance. A similar challenge applies to all theories that claim that an artwork's value derives from the artist's historical achievement or the character of the artist's performance in creating the work (Dutton 1983: 184–87; Davies 2004: 200–5).

We must also distinguish between two kinds of forgeries, only one of which is completely lacking in originality. The thoroughly unoriginal forgery, sometimes called "referential" forgery, copies an existing work, mark for mark. The other, sometimes

called an "inventive" forgery, is a work the forger creates by emulating a known style, either that of a particular artist or a historical period, generally because works of that artist or period are highly prized.

Most of the famous forgeries are of this second, inventive kind. Evidently, few would be so misguided as to make a referential forgery of the *Mona Lisa* (or any other famous work) and then try to sell it as the original. Nonetheless, the possibility of indistinguishable copies of existing artworks has generated much philosophical interest as we will see further on.

Actual cases of inventive forgery exist in painting, musical composition and poetry. In painting, the most famous is *The Supper at Emmaus*, a twentieth-century painting by Han van Meegeren, which van Meegeren claimed was an early Vermeer. Though it was a clumsy pastiche of some features of Vermeer's work, the forgery fooled experts at the time, partly because the paucity of early Vermeers made direct comparisons difficult (Werness 1983: 25). Another well-known case of inventive forgery occurred in music: twentieth-century violinist Fritz Kreisler composed and played works that he claimed were by unknown eighteenth-century composers (Levinson 1990: 102). The motive, it seems, was not profit but rather the pleasure of inventing and playing works in an old-fashioned musical style for which Kreisler had an affinity. There is a similar case for inventive forgery in poetry: in the eighteenth century James Macpherson attributed to an ancient Gaelic bard named Ossian poems that Macpherson himself wrote, emulating the style of fragments of genuine Ossian poetry (Margolis 1983: 162–63). Though these three forgers undoubtedly had considerable talent for artistic invention, the works they produced, though much praised in their time, were later judged to be of minor aesthetic interest when their origins were known.

In calling a work "original" we should also distinguish between the claim that a work was invented by the maker and not copied from another work, and the claim that a work is original in being groundbreaking or innovative. The originality argument associates greater originality (of either kind) with greater aesthetic value; this, however, is not necessarily the case. Work that originates with a pedestrian painter will undoubtedly be uninteresting. On the other hand, a copy may have considerable aesthetic value. Rubens's *Rape of Europa*, for example, is a beautiful painting, even though it is a direct copy of Titian's *Rape of Europa*.

We should also keep in mind that the high value placed on originality (in the sense of innovation) is a modern phenomenon. In earlier eras, superlative quality was often achieved by artists who were apparently following rather than breaking with convention; for example, who were working within a religious tradition. One might respond that such works nonetheless have great originality of style, meaning individuality. But originality in this sense does not undermine the appearance theory: individual style is part of the way a work looks rather than an historical fact external to the work's appearance.

Similarly, lack of originality is often a discernible feature of a work's appearance. Experts who compare forgeries or copies directly with original works learn to recognize the painstaking, labored look of works made as exact copies (Friedlander 1941a: 147). Insofar as originality (or its lack) is a feature of a work's appearance, however, the originality argument does not seriously threaten the appearance theory.

The cognitive stock argument

A more fundamental argument against the appearance theory is the one Wollheim directs against the scrutiny thesis, described earlier. Wollheim argues that what we perceive in an artwork can never be separated from the cognitive stock we bring to it (Wollheim 1993a: 134–35). He points out that we may be unable to see certain things without appropriate concepts, beliefs and information. The van Meegeren forgery is an example of this: the weaknesses of the fraudulent Vermeer were only perceived when people learned the truth of its origins.

One might object that on Wollheim's view what we see and appreciate in a work may result from cultural indoctrination. To bolster such skepticism, it is often pointed out that Etruscan statues, long enjoyed for their beauty, were some years ago removed from view at the Metropolitan Museum simply because they were discovered to be forgeries, not because of newly uncovered aesthetic flaws (Meyer 1983: 78). The opposite, so-called "Sotheby" effect is also grounds for suspicion: the discovery that a rather cursory sketch is from the hand of Matisse may suddenly invest it with arresting new visual qualities (Harrison 1968: 121). In fact, many forgers, including van Meegeren, were artists of some talent, embittered by failure, who set out to show that their works, labeled with an important name, would be highly valued.

Yet though cultural and historical knowledge may illegitimately inflate or deflate appreciation, it also, as Wollheim argues, plays a role in increasing powers of visual discrimination. It is a fact that certain people (i.e. those steeped in relevant cultural knowledge and having certain visual talents) have the ability to distinguish, merely by looking, an original Rembrandt from a fake, in many, even most, cases. Such experts evidently discern more when looking at an artwork than nonexperts do; this is why we learn to see things in artworks from what they point out to us. Nonetheless, this problem for the contextualist view remains: what an art expert points out may not keep us from appreciating the forged copy that to our own eyes is just as beautiful as the original – and, one may ask, why should it? As the appearance theory suggests, it seems to be part of the very idea of aesthetic interest that it be produced by our own direct scrutiny of a work rather than what we learn about it from others.

From the formalist point of view, the contextualist fails to see that it is fundamental to aesthetic appreciation that it can remain stubbornly independent of what we know about a work's importance or lack of it. If we are captivated by an inauthentic Etruscan statue the experience is undoubtedly an aesthetic one: it seems likely that there are Etruscan art experts whose first interest in such art was generated by seeing the Etruscan forgeries in the Metropolitan Museum. Similarly, some musicians report taking guilty aesthetic pleasure in Kreisler's faux eighteenth-century music. The formalist insight is that some forgeries and copies induce a genuine aesthetic response.

From the contextualist point of view, the appearance theorist (or formalist) fails to recognize that cultural knowledge increases our ability to perceive appropriately what is contained within a work of art. The contextualist insight is that appropriate perceptions of art (and well-founded appreciation) are inextricably bound up with cultural knowledge that comes from sources outside the work. We appear to need a view that incorporates both formalist and contextualist views.

Goodman's hybrid view

In *Languages of Art* (1976), Nelson Goodman argues for a position that combines elements of both views. Goodman sounds like a contextualist when he argues that even if we cannot distinguish a great work from a copy, merely knowing that the original work was made by a great artist affects our current aesthetic encounter with it. On the other hand, he shows a formalist sensibility in insisting that the work of a great painter is in principle distinguishable by its appearance from a mere copy in the long term, even if not currently.

Goodman asks us to imagine we have in front of us two paintings, one we know to be Rembrandt's *Lucretia* and the other, an indiscernible copy of it (Goodman 1976: 99–112). Goodman claims that even though we can't see any difference between the two, the copy still differs for us aesthetically from the original. Knowing that one was produced by Rembrandt, he says, we cannot rule out the possibility of learning in the future to see a subtle difference between the two that we can't see currently. This, he claims, creates an aesthetic difference for us in the present.

Interpreted in terms of everyday, practical experience, Goodman's claim seems plausible. We may be unable at first to distinguish two wines by their taste. But if we are told of a difference – for example, that one is produced in oak barrels – we can eventually learn from repeated comparisons, by focusing on oakiness, to distinguish them easily. We apparently have at our disposal sensory information – the oak taste – that we cannot make use of without understanding how wine is made. Similarly, Goodman is suggesting that knowing a work to be a Rembrandt prepares us to see what visually distinguishes a Rembrandt from a work that, to the untrained eye, looks identical. To bolster his claim, Goodman points to the case of the van Meegeren forgery, which over time became easily distinguishable from a Vermeer (Goodman 1976: 110).

It is doubtful, however, that we would say that there is an aesthetic difference to us now between two wines we cannot tell apart simply because we know one is of a great vintage and the other is not. This is because what we mean by an aesthetic difference is one we encounter through our own sensory experience. Furthermore, the practical interpretation of Goodman's claim does not speak to another more theoretical issue: what if there were a perfect (molecule for molecule) copy of *Lucretia*, possibly produced by an advanced computer, one that couldn't possibly be discriminated from the original? Would it still, according to Goodman, differ in aesthetic value from the Rembrandt original? Goodman insists that we cannot rule out seeing the difference between the two in the future. The familiar "molecule for molecule" argument, however, stipulates that we do rule out that anyone will ever be able to see the difference and Goodman has not shown that this is an incoherent scenario. As we shall see later on, Arthur Danto presents a thought experiment to show that, in the case of radically minimal artworks, the possibility of genuinely indiscernible paintings of varying aesthetic value is more than merely theoretical.

Goodman on forgery

In addition to provoking discussion of exact copies, Goodman's work generated considerable interest in the topic of forgery with his distinction between autographic

and allographic arts. He argued that there is a fundamental difference between arts that are forgeable by exact copying and those that are not. Arts such as painting and sculpture he called "autographic," in that, like an autograph or signature, no copy no matter how exact counts as an original unless it is the work of a certain hand (Goodman 1976: 113). This leads Goodman to his useful definition of a forgery as "an object falsely purporting to have the history of production requisite for the (or an) original of the work" (Goodman 1976: 122). A forged Lincoln signature falsely purports to have been produced by Lincoln during his lifetime when it was actually produced in the recent past by a shady local dealer.

By contrast, in poetry and music, any accurate copy of the original words or notes, even if recently produced by a shady dealer, is not a forgery but an instance of the poem or the piece of music. Arts of this kind Goodman calls "allographic," claiming that such artworks are identified by a document, performance or reading in which the right words or notes are presented in the right order.

In recent years Goodman's claim that music is not forgeable has been reexamined. Peter Kivy argues that someone could invent a slight variation of a specific Bach work and produce a forged score to back up the claim that this was Bach's own version (Kivy 2000: 233–35); this would seem to count as a forgery of a musical work, though, as Kivy acknowledges, it is a marginal case. Jerrold Levinson has argued, more broadly, that the history of production of a musical composition – that it was produced by a certain composer at a certain time – is essential to that work's identity (Levinson 1990: 95–98). If this view is correct, then one could forge a musical composition by forging an original manuscript score even if one kept every note and tempo marking the same; one might, for example, mimic youthful handwriting when copying a mature work. Merely misrepresenting the date or the maker of a musical work can change the way it is interpreted and performed even when every note remains identical.

Nonetheless, the autographic/allographic distinction points to an important difference in the way intentions are formulated and expressed in the creation of art. In some arts – painting, sculpture and printmaking – the artist's intentions are expressed in the production of a unique physical object or a set of works produced by such an object – a finished painting, a sculpture or a series of prints made from a unique etched plate. In other arts – musical composition, literature and dance – the artist's intentions are expressed by creating a kind, or type, of object or event – a score, sequence of words or directions for a performance. Of course, as Goodman recognized, performance arts usually are created in several stages: an opera is allographic in its initial stage yet each performance is a unique autographic event: no replica (perhaps by electronic means) of a Maria Callas performance of *La Bohème*, no matter how indistinguishable it is from an actual Callas performance, counts as genuine unless Callas is doing the singing.

As the Kivy and Levinson discussions of musical forgery show, the more closely we examine the details of artistic practice the more Goodman's distinction requires elaboration and qualification. Though Goodman claims that whether a work is forgeable or not determines an art form's allographic/autographic status, what his view seems to show instead is that how an artwork is created, whether in allographic (notational) or autographic (physical) terms, determines how (not whether) it can be forged. In arts in which a physical object is forged, forgery is a misrepresentation of

that object's history; in arts in which words are strung together, forgery is a misrepresentation of the history of those words, by falsifying the time, the maker or setting, which distorts the work's interpretation.

Kirk Pillow recently provided an example of the way particular artistic practice affects forgeability. He argues that Sol LeWitt created drawings in a way that makes them unforgeable and thus undermines Goodman's autographic/allographic distinction (Pillow 2003: 365–80). LeWitt wrote directions for making wall drawings that he intended anyone could physically produce. LeWitt has claimed that each drawing that complied with his directions would result in a new and distinct work of art and yet would still count as a genuine LeWitt work. If Pillow is correct, then although painting is the autographic art par excellence, it can be practiced in ways that deliberately blur the line between the autographic and the allographic.

Finally, Goodman's definition of forgery as "an object falsely purporting to have the history of production requisite for the (or an) original of the work" bears closer examination. His phrasing suggests it is the object that purports something false. It has been objected, however, that people, not objects, purport falsely (Beardsley 1983: 226). In fact, one common form of forgery concerns an innocently crafted object that is provided with a false label or documentation; for example, when a genuinely old workshop copy is purported to be an original (Friedlander 1941b: 195).

It is sometimes argued, however, that forgery requires that a person physically shape or form an object in order to deceive; the claim is that a misrepresented workshop copy would be a fraud but not a forgery (Pillow 2003: 374). The concept of forgery, however, does seem elastic enough to apply to objects that have the potential to mislead built into their physical appearance. A skilled engraver might make fake dollar bills just to show his prowess, intending that they never leave his workshop. Nonetheless if the bills were to mistakenly get into circulation, we would be justified in calling them forged bills though the maker did not shape or form them to deceive. This lends credence to Goodman's definition: some objects "falsely purport" a certain history of production merely by the way they look.

Danto and the appearance theory

As we saw earlier, Goodman claimed that we cannot rule out the possibility of learning to distinguish, based on appearance, a valuable work of art from its less valuable exact copy. Arthur Danto, however, may be seen to challenge this view with what has been called his Gallery of Indiscernibles. He asks us to imagine a series of identical plain canvas squares painted in red: one is a work by a minimalist artist, another is a "clever bit of Moscow landscape called 'Red Square,'" another happens to be the same color and shape for reasons that have nothing to do with art – perhaps it is a paint sample (Danto 1981: 1–3). As Danto describes his Gallery, some of these indistinguishable squares are artworks of aesthetic interest while others are not. If his thought experiment holds up, it sounds the death knell for the appearance theory; this is because there is nothing discernible in the appearance of these objects that accounts for the greater aesthetic interest of some of them compared with others: the differences among them are purely external and contextual.

In response to Danto's scenario, some have pointed out that it depends on marginal kinds of art (namely, minimalist or conceptual) from which we should not draw conclusions about how art in general could be practiced (Wollheim 1993b: 31–33; Janaway 1997: 1–2). Along related lines, one might argue that if, as the appearance theory suggests, what we normally mean by an aesthetic difference is one we access by means of a sensory experience, then the visually indiscernible aesthetic differences among Danto's red squares are only marginally called "aesthetic." The same point applies to Duchamp's famous "ready-mades": when Duchamp presented a factory-made urinal as art, he evidently succeeded in endowing that object with historical and cultural significance; what is much less convincing is that the urinal he chose is more aesthetically significant than the other urinals produced in the same factory and indistinguishable from it. Although normally aesthetic differentiation and differences in historical significance go together, an artist deliberately testing our conceptual framework can separate the two, as Duchamp did.

Before we finally leave the appearance theory we might sum up its contribution as follows: the theory is based on the insight that, in the visual arts, aesthetic experience is determined by what an individual sees with his or her own eyes; the theory fails to acknowledge, however, that what one sees depends on what one knows. Even though the aesthetic response is (normally) a response determined by individual sensory experience, that does not mean, as the appearance theory suggests, that it is not dependent on the individual's cultural knowledge. In marginal cases, such as Duchamp's urinal, it appears that cultural knowledge is powerful enough to create an aesthetic response to an object that lacks any special aesthetic distinction, that is, which is merely of historical or cultural interest.

Originals and historical authenticity

We could, then, restate our original question as follows: Would our preference to examine an original artwork rather than a copy be justifiable as sound aesthetic practice even though in some marginal cases there is no perceptible difference between them but only an historical one? To pursue this question we need to examine the difference between aesthetic and historical authenticity.

We certainly might prefer to see the work of the famous minimalist painter because he or she physically applied the paint to one of the red squares, just as we might prefer to see the actual urinal that Duchamp selected. Such a preference for historical authenticity, however, applies just as much to articles with no aesthetic interest whatsoever: visitors to Martin Luther King's house are said to want to see his actual toothbrush. Though the toothbrush is not of any aesthetic interest, it is a causal connection between King and the visitors to his home who see it. It appears that this kind of physical connection to an actual famous person figures in our desire to see the genuine *Mona Lisa*, the actual handiwork of a well-known minimalist artist or the urinal chosen by Duchamp.

Yet the desire to see the actual *Mona Lisa* is different in important respects from our desire to see King's actual toothbrush. If we were promised we would see a molecule-for-molecule replica of the toothbrush, it would not satisfy our desire for

actual contact with King and his life, even though the exact replica would give us the same visual information as the original toothbrush. In the case of seeing the actual *Mona Lisa*, however, the desire to have certain exact visual information is at least as important as the desire for authenticity: if the actual *Mona Lisa* became too damaged to see very well – in fact it has taken on an unpleasant greenish tinge as the pink pigments have faded – we might well prefer to see an exact early workshop copy of the painting, with the original warmth in the skin tone intact, if one were available.

Our desire is not primarily for contact with Leonardo – though we may desire that also – but for contact with the exact visual experience that Leonardo intended viewers to have. In the case of a nearly indistinguishable original and copy, it is precisely because we ourselves cannot see much difference between the two that we must resort to what we know to ensure that what we see traces back to the original artist's acts of seeing.

It has been pointed out that in the cases in which the original work is missing – as is the case with the Greek sculptures we know only by way of Roman copies – we value the copies more highly than we would if the originals were available. This seems to suggest that we are unduly prejudiced against copies when originals do exist. We may, however, be expressing a perfectly consistent and sound policy: we wish to get information that is as close as possible to the visual experience the artist intended. We thus in general prefer works that don't interpose another act of seeing, such as the copyist's, between our eyes and the artist's. But since our aim is to trace our own experience back to the originating visual experience, this aim can be, if need be, fulfilled in alternative ways.

In adopting our policy of seeking out originals despite our inability to distinguish them from copies, we appear to recognize, even if not explicitly, that we are not always immediately conscious of how what we see (or hear or read) in art is affecting us. It is because we know that art can affect us slowly, with repeated exposure, that we go to see the *Mona Lisa* whether or not in the short term we can see for ourselves anything special in it. We desire a visual experience that is as close to Leonardo's as possible because of what we may learn some day to see after repeated encounters with it.

The preference for quality

Our trust that the original *Mona Lisa* will increase our powers of discrimination over the long run is tied to assumptions about the quality of such works. One striking characteristic of a high-quality painting is the seamless integration of the ideas it expresses and the way it looks, which gives conceptual significance to even the smallest sensory differences. In Bellini's *The Madonna of the Meadow*, for example, because of the resonance between the deep, pure blue of the Virgin's robe and the transparent blue of the distant sky, we must attend to the exact hue of the robe to appreciate Bellini's idea of the Virgin's moral simplicity and heavenly nature. If the forger or copier is less talented than the artist, the exact shade of blue required might not have been within his powers of discrimination. Comparing a copy with a genuine work teaches us to discern and appreciate such small visual differences. Even in the case of Danto's Gallery of Indiscernibles, if we believe that the differences

among the red squares are aesthetic ones, we would do well to go to the Gallery and see them for ourselves.

See also Formalism (Chapter 9), Goodman (Chapter 18), Ontology of art (Chapter 23), Creativity (Chapter 42), Painting (Chapter 57), Sculpture (Chapter 58), Music (Chapter 61).

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Further reading

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Janaway, C. (1999) "What a Musical Forgery Isn't," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 39: 62–71. (Takes issue with Levinson's account of music forgery.)

Margolis, J. (1998) "Farewell to Danto and Goodman," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 38: 353–74. (Compares and rejects the views of Danto and Goodman on artworks, forgery and perceivable differences.)

46
HIGH ART VERSUS LOW ART

John A. Fisher

Hamlet versus *South Park*; J. Alfred Prufrock versus Mickey Mouse; Beethoven's Fifth symphony versus Justin Bieber's "Eenie Meanie." Such contrasts instantly evoke a familiar and important cultural divide, typically expressed as the distinction between "high" and "low" art. In spite of its familiarity, however, there are many different intuitions about what the general contrast is. Is it a contrast between *art forms* (e.g. poetry versus videogames; symphonies versus Top 40 pop songs) or between genres within art forms (e.g. avant-garde novels versus mystery novels), or is it a distinction between *individual works* in the same art form or genre (*Wozzeck* versus *Turandot*; *Citizen Kane* versus *Conan the Barbarian*; "A Day in the Life" versus "Louie, Louie"; *West Side Story* versus *Hair*)? The complexity of the distinction raises a number of basic questions: Do the terms express one fundamental distinction? Is that distinction theoretically coherent? Does it mark significant aesthetic differences and artistic value? Finally, what is the relation of this distinction to the concept of art?

A paradoxical distinction

"High art" is the clearer half of the contrast. In typical use it certainly refers to paradigms of art: *Hamlet*, Eliot's "The Waste Land," Beethoven's *Eroica*, *Swan Lake*, the paintings of Cézanne – indeed, museum paintings generally, most classical music, most poetry and so forth. Now, if "high art" denominates the central cases of art and if by being central they delineate what it is to be art, it is natural to think of the term that contrasts with high art as denoting objects that are not really art, that are labeled "art" only at best in a nonliteral sense: art by courtesy only.

But then is low art *non*art? As Ted Cohen wonders:

> If the distinction between high art and low art is like the distinction between art and non-art, then why do we need *both* distinctions? Suppose I am already lumbered with an art/non-art device, shouldering it because I cannot seem to get along without it. Why do I also drag along a wedge for separating high art from low art? What extra work does it do?
>
> (Cohen 1993: 152)

Even though he clearly sees the relation between the two distinctions as puzzling, Cohen contends that each distinction seems logically distinct and indeed indispensable. One point seems clear: even though "high" and "low" read as adjectives of contrasting quality, we should not equate the high/low distinction with a third distinction, that between *good* and *bad* art. Although "high art" certainly brings to mind canonical works in various art forms, there is much high art – certain paintings, poems, chamber music – that is uninspired, minor, derivative and so forth. Conversely, it does not seem plausible that *all* "low art" could turn out to merit the status of art but be all bad. Even if rock music is low art, *some* songs – for example, by the Beatles, Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix – are surely successful and important examples of art. Thus we cannot equate high art with good art and low art with bad art.

In spite of being controversial – and frequently rejected as undemocratic or elitist – the distinction remains deeply entrenched and a very influential way of structuring our thinking and acting toward the arts. The very ease with which writers can mention "high art" (and "highbrow," "middlebrow" and "lowbrow" art) and expect to be clearly understood shows how firmly entrenched this distinction is in the conceptual scheme we apply to the arts. The types of media and academic coverage of the arts and entertainment, the syllabi of college classes as well as the reasoning used to justify public support of the arts are all predicated on the assumption that high art has great value and is more worth taking seriously and subsidizing than popular art. Indeed, the very concept of art is often delineated by reference to familiar examples of high art, such as Beethoven's Fifth, *Anna Karenina* or *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. Writers find it natural to equate "high art" with "art" per se as it is theorized in the philosophy of art. For example, failing to find an adequate definition of popular art, Gracyk concludes, "We are thrown back onto the problem of defining 'popular' so that it appropriately contrasts the popular with 'serious,' high, or fine art" (2007b: 383). Accordingly, when the notion of artistic value is analyzed or defended it is almost always by appeal to values that are associated with high art and exemplified by examples of high artworks.

The underlying conceptual structure

There are two main ways of analyzing the semantic structure underlying the high–low distinction. One way is to associate high art with so-called "high arts," in short, to equate high art with certain art forms or genres such as classical music, sculpture and poetry. Call this the form and genre view. This suggests that the distinction is an offspring of the "Modern system of the arts" defined by Kristeller (1992). He argued that eighteenth-century thinkers for the first time grouped certain arts together into a separate and coherent group of activities and artifacts with a distinctive character; these were the "fine" arts. In 1746 Charles Batteux influentially proposed the following grouping as defining the fine arts: painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry. Kristeller argued that such groupings were the origin of the modern notion of art with a capital "A."

The origin of the distinction in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe may suggest to some that it is no more relevant to contemporary society than is the taste

in clothes of earlier centuries. Some (Levine 1988; Novitz 1989, 1992) write as if the high/low distinction instead is a twentieth-century bias. However, there has always been a tendency to rank and to divide art forms into higher and lower. Ranking the arts was a common activity of thinkers from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century. Leonardo, for instance, argued that painting was superior to poetry, music and sculpture (Kemp 1989). The ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl points out that distinctions between broad categories of music and consequent value hierarchies are common in societies as diverse as the Blackfoot, Asian societies and traditional Iranian society (Nettl 2005: 364). The high/low distinction is not a local cultural bias.

Even granting that fact, some social theorists would argue that the existence of such hierarchies reflects social power relations rather than differences of artistic value. This is the view implied by the influential cultural sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who comments on the difference between highbrow and middlebrow taste: "The various kinds of cultural competence encountered in a class society derive their social value from the power of social discrimination … this system is … always hierarchized" (1993: 129; for a critique of Bourdieu's theory, see Crowther 1994). As Gracyk puts it, "Some philosophers contend that fine art is essentially different from popular art, but others hold that the distinction is entirely social in origin" (2007b: 380).

Although the term "high art" is strongly associated with certain art forms, there are significant reasons to seek a deeper explanation of the high/low distinction, one that is based on properties that determine the location of an artwork on the high/low hierarchy. Even Batteux used a common property to ground his set of fine arts: the property of being imitations of beautiful nature. Although there is a close correlation between certain art forms and genres and high art or low art properties, it is problematic to simply identify the high art/low art hierarchy with a set of forms and genres. Consider for example the property of formal complexity, especially of a challenging or unpredictable character. This property is commonly associated with high art, whereas simple predictable forms are associated with popular arts. Although such properties are highly correlated with certain art forms and genres, there are no necessary connections.

Accordingly, there is another way to analyze the distinction, one that explains the conceptual structure underlying our actual deployment of the distinction and does not identify it simply with art forms and genres. This analysis involves a multidimensional cluster of properties. It is multidimensional because there are many properties of works that in various combinations weave together to comprise the concept of high art. For convenience I will call these "threads." I call it a cluster distinction by analogy with Berys Gaut's account of art as a cluster concept. Gaut rejects essentialist accounts that define the concept of art by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Instead, Gaut proposes that there are many properties that tend to count "toward something's being a work of art, and the absence of which counts against it being a work of art: (1) possessing positive aesthetic properties … (2) being expressive of emotion, (3) being intellectually challenging … (4) being formally complex and coherent … " (2000: 28). Gaut makes no claim that his list of properties is entirely correct. The basic idea is to reject an essentialist definition and to propose that the category of artworks is more loosely identified by a cluster of properties.

The concept of high art similarly appears to be a category that identifies member artworks by their assumed possession or intended possession of some of a cluster of properties. A further feature of the cluster is that these properties (the threads) often come in degrees; they are scalar – for instance, the property of possessing a challenging formal structure. This helps to explain why the high-to-low hierarchy is actually continuous rather than binary. To complete the explanation we must add that a given work may have a mixture of properties in the high art cluster. These two features explain the emergence of the category of "middlebrow": works that have some of the properties of high art but also lack some or have them to a lower degree or possess some of the properties that positively weigh toward the lower end of the scale, such as being made primarily for entertainment. "Middlebrow," accordingly, is a necessary term precisely because the threads of the distinction are a matter of degree, and because there are multiple threads with no single property decisive for one end of the hierarchy or the other.

There is no classical logical structure to this conceptual landscape: some of the properties are logically interrelated and some carry more categorizing weight than others. Nor can it be ignored that this value hierarchy emerged in a historical context, starting in the eighteenth century and becoming solidified in the nineteenth century's Romantic view of art and artists. Hence, some of the historical properties, such as being in a form or genre that originated in aristocratic courts (the first ballets and the first operas were performed in these around 1600) may not by themselves appear today to add artistic value any more than the fact that the galliard was popular in those courts makes it a better dance than the hustle.

The properties of artworks that delineate the concept of high art have to be shareable by many sorts of forms and genres, thus they are second-order properties of properties. They can be roughly divided into the following dimensions. (Note (i) in this model no property is necessary; rather, they tend to count toward a work being high art, and (ii) no one dimension has universal priority over the others, but in context one may dominate, e.g. truth often dominates beauty.)

(H1) *Content*: (i) Representational – morally serious (Lamarque, "Literature," Chapter 50 of this volume), poetic truth, true to life (Hospers – see Lamarque, Chapter 50 of this volume, pp. 526; Passmore 1991: ch. 6); (ii) emotional – genuine, authentic emotional experience, not shallow, conventional or sentimental.

(H2) *Form*: Organically unified into a whole work, internally coherent but not formulaic, formal structures are aesthetically valuable objects of appreciation.

(H3) *Features of a work's creation*: (i) Created by a single artist (the "author," "auteur") or by a group under the direction of a central figure or figures (choreographer, director, composer and librettist), (ii) who exemplifies creativity and originality so as to create a unique work, (iii) has skill, knowledge of her art form, knowledge of the relevant tradition of high arts, (iv) intends to contribute to that tradition (Scruton 2007 emphasizes continuity of high culture), (v) aims to control the work so as to achieve formal cohesion.

(H4) *Nature of intended effects* on the audience (the nature of its intended engagement and the primary use of the work): (i) intended to engage the intellect and in

some cases moral dispositions, (ii) and to be appreciated aesthetically (what this amounts to is controversial), and (iii) possessing significant autonomy ("art for art's sake").

One traditional idea of aesthetic appreciation is the Kantian notion of disinterestedness, which Bourdieu (1984) assumes is required to engage high art. However, a stance of Kantian disinterestedness seems contrary to the way most people experience a majority of high artworks. Moreover, many theories of art, for example expression theory and pragmatic theories, reject such a Kantian basis for art.

Bourdieu denies that the "aesthetic disposition" required to engage with high art is, as Kant argued, a universal faculty. He argues that it is a product of learning and cultural position rather than a natural endowment that magically leads to "a miracle of the unequal class distribution of the capacity for inspired encounters with works of art and high culture generally" (1984: 173). This leads Bourdieu to his view about the hidden social function of high art: "the sacralization of culture and art fulfils a vital function by contributing to the consecration of the social order: to enable educated people to believe in barbarism and persuade the barbarians within the gates of their own barbarity" (1993: 236).

Bourdieu goes on to contrast the "aesthetic disposition" with the "popular aesthetic." This, the aesthetic stance of the less cultured, he characterizes as "based on the affirmation of continuity between art and life, which implies the subordination of form to function, or, one might say, on refusing the refusal, which is the starting point of the high aesthetic" (1984: 176). He takes the "aesthetic disposition," by contrast, to require "rejecting what is generic, i.e., *common*, 'easy' and immediately accessible, starting with everything that reduces the aesthetic animal to pure and simple animality, to palpable pleasure or sensual desire" (1984: 175–76).

The dimension of the intended effects and primary uses or functions of a work tends to be one of the main threads that count toward placing popular art toward the lower end of the hierarchy of artistic status. Thus, one property that tends to give works in an art form lower artistic status is this:

(L1) *Primary Goal is entertainment*: If a popular artwork's main goal is entertainment, to provide diversion and easy pleasure not involving any significant intellectual or perceptual demands, then it is (i) not autonomous and (ii) its paramount focus does not involve the aesthetic and content goals ascribed to high art.

Another important feature tending to lower artistic status involves the prominent bodily effects popular arts often intend to have on their audience.

(L2) *A Primary Aim is to cause basic bodily responses*: This would be such as dancing, singing along, screaming and laughing, in short, physical engagement.

Popular music is typically designed to move the body to dance, and not merely in decorous ways but in sensuous whole-body ways (Shusterman 1991). The fact that bodily responses tend to count toward lower artistic status explains why we do not rank Strauss waltzes as high art even though they are well-crafted examples of

classical music. Humor and jokes are also largely relegated to lower artistic status because they evoke immediate physical reactions, laughing or smiling, that seem to bypass conscious reasoning. Moreover, humor has been traditionally regarded as irrational because it invites us to appreciate incongruity (Morreall 2009: ch. 1). One reason stand-up comedy routines and sitcom episodes are typically discounted as high art is that humor and jokes are their main point.

The cluster model may seem to have the counterintuitive implication that works in a low art form could be high art and, vice versa, works in a high art form could be lower art. That this seems counterintuitive shows that the form and genre model describes a significant constituent of the high art concept. But the result may also be viewed as a reason to accept the priority of the cluster model. It certainly happens that works of popular art – for example, some popular music genres such as alternative rock – possess properties from the high art cluster. Some episodes of the conceptual sitcom *Community*, with multiple timelines, are as complex as a serious film. On the high art form side, there are, for example, skillful painters, such as Thomas Kinkade and Norman Rockwell, whose kitsch images are not widely regarded as high art. Some art forms strongly enforce either high art or lower art properties, thus they can be labeled high arts or low arts. But many art forms and genres, such as architecture, merely afford the possibility of high art. Movies are a good example of a wide range of possibilities on the high–low scale; even popular genres such as horror, westerns and musicals can produce examples of high art. On the low end of the scale, TV soap operas with their cliché-ridden emotions tend to be constrained to producing low art, as are, for different reasons, comics and videogames. (However, on videogames as art, see Smuts 2005.) Conversely, string quartets are by their form constrained in the opposite direction to possessing high art formal properties.

The cluster model also explains many other cultural ranking phenomena, such as the conflicting intuitions about where to rank some artwork, for example, tango performances or photojournalism. It explains how an art form or genre, such as ceramics, can go from purely craft status to being considered a fine art: this happens when ceramicists (formerly known as potters) emphasize the sculptural possibilities of the medium. Movies too were first considered low art, growing out of carnival shows and vaudeville programs; yet in a few decades they developed the capacity to afford high art properties. Finally, the cluster model explains our initial puzzling intuitions about the multiple levels at which the hierarchy can be applied. It applies to individual works within a form or genre and it also applies to forms or genres insofar as they tend to enforce or discourage the cluster properties that underlie the hierarchy.

If it is more adequate to analyze the underlying conceptual structure of the high/low distinction in terms of characteristic properties presumed to apply to high artworks, rather than to rely on a list of forms or genres to identify high art, then to reject the value hierarchy implies questioning the value of such properties. Conversely, it is easier to reject the hierarchy if it is viewed as an ungrounded preference for certain art forms over others.

Debate about the distinction and the value hierarchy that it encodes is often logically unclear. We can see why by noting that there is a distinction between denial that there are systematic differences between low and high art and rejection of the claim of higher value for high art. This conflation is undoubtedly aided by the ubiquity of value-

laden terms such as "high," "low," "classical," "good taste," "bad taste," etc. Hence, rejections of the distinction are often ambiguous.

Is there a difference between high and low art?

Although disagreement is more naturally centered on the claim of a hierarchy of artistic value, with traditionalists defending it and relativists or populists denying it, some have argued against the idea that there are artistically important differences between high and popular art. (The less pejorative term "popular art" is generally preferred to "low art"; e.g. Novitz in 1989 and 1992 contrasts high art with popular art, whereas Carroll 1998 contrasts high art with mass art.)

An early defender of popular art, David Novitz, denies that there is a significant distinction between high and low art. He says that "there are neither formal nor affective properties which distinguish the high from the popular in art" (1992: 24). Noël Carroll (1998) labels the denial of a high–low distinction "eliminativism." Novitz's argument for eliminativism centers on finding counterexamples to the properties that are often assumed to necessarily distinguish high arts from popular art. However, this does nothing to show that there do not tend to be broad differences across the high–low art spectrum. It appears that Novitz's main aim is to defend the value of popular art and to debunk the status of the high arts, but to that end he has conflated the question of whether there are differences with the question of whether these differences add up to greater aesthetic value for high art.

The eliminativist argument (see Carroll 1998 for analysis) seems to depend on two assumptions called into question by the cluster model: (i) that the distinction is solely based on art forms or genres and (ii) essentialism about what differentiates work in those forms, i.e. that works in high and popular art forms must *necessarily* have certain features or else the distinction collapses. This assumption underlies Novitz's inference: "It is often suggested that formal simplicity is the hallmark of popular art … [b]ut only a moment's reflection shows that not all popular art is either simple or bland" (Novitz 1989: 215). The cluster model implies that these assumptions are mistaken.

Carroll rejects eliminativism. However, he argues that the main contrast is between high art and mass art – a term he prefers to "popular art" because he believes that the creation of a new sort of mass-produced popular art has occurred over the last two centuries.

Carroll proposes three conditions that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for something to be mass art. It must be:

(1) a multiple instance or type artwork;
(2) produced and distributed by a mass technology;
(3) "intentionally designed to gravitate in its structural choices (for example, its narrative forms, symbolism, intended affect and even its content) toward those choices that promise accessibility with minimum effort … for the largest number of untutored (or relatively untutored) audiences."

(Carroll 1998: 196)

The third condition is especially important here, for its language reflects a nonessentialist approach to defining mass art. And its emphasis on easy accessibility reflects the properties sketched in the cluster model. To make a work broadly accessible, it must be constructed to avoid difficulties and challenges. The work must possess a familiar accessible form and incorporate content that has broad appeal. (See Fisher 2004 for worry that "mass art" is not necessarily art, contrary to Carroll's position.)

Is high art more valuable?

Few thinkers deny that there tend to be systematic differences between high art and popular art. These differences are highlighted in the cluster model. But even in regard to the cluster model it can be asked whether, for example, work that is formally focused or explores uncommon emotions is necessarily more aesthetically valuable than work that is more accessible, explores familiar emotions or stimulates the body more than the intellect. Although the debate can be formulated on both the level of art forms/genres and the level of properties, it is more commonly expressed in terms of forms and genres.

There appear to be three general attitudes toward the distinction. First, elitism: the view that the high arts are artistically more valuable on the whole because they primarily encourage the values alluded to in the high art cluster. Second, populism: the view that the arts of popular culture are more alive, authentic, meaningful and on the whole more artistically valuable for modern audiences than the arts of high culture. Third, pluralism: the view that artworks in both popular and high forms and genres can have great artistic value. One such pluralist position would say that popular artworks are aesthetically valuable as measured by the same standards as traditional high art; another version of pluralism would emphasize the different aesthetic values embodied by popular and high art forms and genres. For example, harmonic development and counterpoint is a primary value in classical music, but in jazz it is improvisation that is central and in popular song it is realistic emotional expression.

Populism is more commonly the position of fans of popular entertainment genres than it is a well-developed theory. Shusterman notes that "defenses of popular art are not common, partly because most pop culture enthusiasts do not consider the intellectual critique either relevant or powerful enough to be worthy of response. They see no need to defend their taste against what they regard as weird attacks of uptight intellectuals" (1993: 216). The motivation behind populism is perhaps better expressed by pluralism. Noël Carroll (1998) has articulated and defended the value of mass art in general, and Ted Gracyk (1996, 2007a) has defended the artistic value of rock music in particular by arguing that the aesthetic interests of rock music are different from the interests highlighted in classical music, such as complex harmonic development. Shusterman (1991) has also defended various genres of popular music (country, funk) and entertainment (Shusterman 2003). Pluralist thinkers make multiple points. They can praise the artistic value of the very properties that tend to characterize popular art, such as bodily engagement, or dispute the alleged flaws in popular arts – for instance, that they encourage passive reception (Carroll 1998) – or question the validity of the ideals of high art, such as the veneration of artist genius.

Elitism takes different forms. One prominent elitist, Roger Scruton, frames his position in terms of high Western culture, which he takes,

> to denote an acquisition … which opens the hearts, minds and senses of those who possess it to an intellectual and artistic patrimony. Culture, as I shall describe it in this book is the creation and creator of elites … Although an elite product, its meaning lies in emotions and aspirations that are common to all.
>
> (Scruton 2007: 1)

For Scruton, it is the role that high art plays in preserving (high) culture that makes it especially valuable. He ridicules popular culture as lacking judgment; he asserts that proponents of popular arts tell us "that all those venerable masterpieces can be ignored with impunity, that reality TV is 'as good as' Shakespeare … since nothing is better than anything else and all claims to aesthetic value are void" (2007: 10).

Scruton defends a conservative version of elitism in which canonic works are most valuable because they illuminate the universal truths of the human condition and because they are intrinsically valuable when judged aesthetically. "We do not judge them by measuring those good effects. On the contrary, we judge them on their intrinsic merits" (2007: 49).

Scruton's defense of the canon of masterpieces needs to be supported by reasons why the culture of popular artworks lacks aesthetic judgments, universal human values and so on. Scruton's conservative elitism cannot be taken as a description of how the concept of high art is actually deployed, for, in addition to criticizing contemporary popular culture, he is highly critical of some prominent strains of high art, namely avant-garde art: "Avant-gardism should be understood, I believe, as the last gasp of a romantic illusion" (1997: 471). This criticism contrasts with a common view of art history as a progressive march of ever more sophisticated artworks toward avant-garde art. (Carroll, for example, tends to associate high art with the avant-garde: "contemporary high art … is primarily avant-garde art"; 1998: 179.)

Avant-garde elitism was famously expressed by the composer Milton Babbitt in his provocative essay, "Who Cares If You Listen?" (1958). He argues that difficult, mathematically based music that only a few can understand should be viewed as valuable in just the way that advanced physics or math research is: "if it be contended that research, even in its least 'practical' phases, contributes to the sum of knowledge in the particular realm, what possibly can contribute more to our knowledge of music than a genuinely original composition?" He implies that such uniquely original compositions are valuable objects in themselves, as objects of pure musical cognition, not necessarily as objects to be enjoyed by ordinary lovers of classical music.

While critical of many features of Scruton's defense of high culture, Hamilton develops a defense of "classics" that includes classics of popular culture. Appealing to some of the properties in the cluster concept, such as skill and originality, he finds that "Classics in the living sense, which exist in the present, are found in all the arts" (Hamilton 2009: 403). Hamilton describes his position as a "meritocratic middle way between elitism and populism." Where is the value in "classics" of pop culture other than their commercial success as works of a certain genre? Hamilton's

answer is, "one should recognize that even popular classics are created through selection and judgement – and so are in that sense elite products with a communal reference, serving a shared way of life."

It is common when addressing the issue of the superior value of high art over popular arts and entertainment (should one prefer the former to the latter even if the latter give equal or greater pleasure?) to refer to J. S. Mill's famous attempt in *Utilitarianism* to distinguish pleasures by their *quality* in addition to their quantity. In brief, Mill argued that there were higher and lower pleasures, with the higher being superior and intrinsically more valuable and desirable. Mill claims that those who know both sorts of pleasures will prefer the pleasures afforded by the higher faculties of intellect and moral sentiment to those afforded by the lower faculties, which are understood to be the more physical pleasures. (Mill's notion of higher and lower pleasures can be traced back to Plato's dialogues; Gibbs 1986.) In its emphasis on the higher faculties, Mill's division reflects some of the high art threads in the cluster model, but his claim that we would prefer the higher is widely doubted. Levinson, however, does endorse Mill's test: "as John Stuart Mill famously observed, the best, and possibly the only, evidence of one satisfaction or experience being better than another is the considered, ultimate, 'decided' preference for the one over the other by those fully acquainted with and appreciative of both" (2002: 234).

Goldman shares the conventional skepticism about Mill's test: "Unfortunately, Mill's claim is not borne out by experience" (1995: 173). Goldman offers instead a sort of cognitive basis for claiming that the enjoyment of high art involves superior pleasures:

> Pleasures are deeper in this sense when they result from meeting challenges and when they involve cognitive capacities as well as sensation and feeling. More superficial pleasures are "mindless" and escapist in the sense of escape from vigorous mental activities. Pleasures that derive from satisfying engagement of all our mental capacities operating together are more deeply or thoroughly satisfying, and it is these kinds of pleasure that appreciating fine art affords.
>
> (Goldman 1995: 176)

Huovinen (2008) also implies the superiority of cognitive experience by arguing that classical music requires more sophisticated listening than does popular music; it requires listeners to possess music-theoretical concepts. This leads him to consistently speak of "high" and "higher" levels of musical understanding. Yet, even if we concede that complex formal structures are central to classical music and intended to be objects of appreciative understanding, why would that make the music more aesthetically valuable than music that does not present these formal difficulties? The answer is likely to be located in the superior value of enjoying such formal structures or of exercising "higher" faculties in understanding such structures and the problems that they address and solve.

Finally, claims such as these need to be distinguished from claims that appeal to the instrumental value of experiencing art. Goldman claims that the experience of the most challenging art is valuable in itself; in Levinson's terminology experiences of the best artworks "are more worth having" (2002: 233–36) than experiences of

lesser artworks. Yet, frequently arguments for the value of a genre focus on the instrumental value of such works rather than the value of the experience in itself.

This is common in defenses of humor. For example, using the principle that "artworks fostering attitudes conducive to human flourishing are better, *ceteris paribus*, than artworks that promote harm to humans" (2009: 76), Morreall argues that comedies are more valuable than tragedies because in "responding to life's problems, what comedy recommends is not emotions but thinking … [and] the good of the group trumps the good of the individual" (2009: 82). These are instrumental reasons for asserting that comedy is valuable. These are not the sort of reasons that proponents of high art seem to favor. Moreover, if we locate the argument between high and low art in the realm of instrumental value, it is not obvious that high art has the advantage. It was once believed that the high arts made people better – they were edifying – and that low or entertainment arts made people worse, but the actual situation is clearly more complicated than that.

See also Taste (Chapter 25), Aesthetic universals (Chapter 26), Humor (Chapter 41), Film (Chapter 53), Videogames (Chapter 54), Comics (Chapter 55).

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47
ENVIRONMENTAL AESTHETICS

Allen Carlson

Environmental aesthetics is one of the major new fields of aesthetics that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. It focuses on philosophical issues concerning aesthetic appreciation of the world at large and, moreover, the world as constituted not simply by objects but also by environments. Thus, environmental aesthetics extends beyond the confines of the artworld and appreciation of works of art to aesthetic appreciation of environments, not only natural ones, but also human-influenced and human-constructed environments. However, although the field has come into its own relatively recently and treats human as well as natural environments, it has historical roots in earlier work on aesthetic appreciation of nature. To understand the current state of the field, it is useful to examine briefly this background and the developments that followed from it.

Historical roots

The historical roots of environmental aesthetics lie in the ideas about aesthetic appreciation developed in the eighteenth century and given classic expression by Kant. Central to this approach was the concept of disinterestedness, in virtue of which aesthetic experience was construed as distanced from everyday interests, such as the practical and the personal. The coupling of the concept of disinterestedness with the eighteenth-century fascination with the natural world resulted in a rich tradition of landscape appreciation. With the aid of disinterestedness, not only could domesticated, rural countrysides be seen as beautiful, but even the wildest natural environments could be appreciated as sublime. Moreover, between the beautiful and the sublime, disinterestedness made space for the emergence of an even more powerful mode of landscape appreciation, the picturesque. Initially the idea of the picturesque was tied to particular sorts of landscapes having features common in landscape paintings of the day. However, it ultimately developed as a more general mode of appreciation that could facilitate aesthetic experience of any kind of environment simply by focusing attention on picture-like qualities involving sensory surface and

formal composition. The upshot was an eighteenth-century aesthetic synthesis with disinterestedness as the central theoretical concept, landscapes as paradigm objects of aesthetic appreciation and formalist, picturesque appreciation as the favored mode for such objects.

The eighteenth-century aesthetic synthesis, however, did not come down to the present completely intact, and the current state of environmental aesthetics is as much a function of the changes it underwent as of the synthesis itself. Chief among these changes was the ascendance of works of art and the decline of landscapes as paradigm objects of aesthetic appreciation. This shift in emphasis may be traced to several sources, such as the solidification of the so-called modern system of the arts, the prominence given to art as opposed to nature in Hegel's philosophy and the expanded importance of the artifactual as opposed to the natural in Western civilization as a whole. Whatever the causes, however, and in spite of the Romantic period's seeming infatuation with nature, the upshot within philosophical aesthetics was that the aesthetics of the natural world was increasingly marginalized. Under the lingering spell of the picturesque, it ultimately focused on little more than landscapes especially suited for disinterested, formalist appreciation: grand scenes easily composed to enhance picture-like sensory and formal qualities. Although lacking nature as their main focus, the other two elements of the eighteenth-century synthesis, disinterestedness and formal appreciation, survived into the twentieth century. At the beginning of the century, they were given renewed life in the classic reinterpretation of disinterestedness in Edward Bullough's psychical distance theory and the uncompromising formalism of Clive Bell's theory of art. Moreover, with Bullough and Bell the marginalization of aesthetic appreciation of anything other than art was reaffirmed.

Background developments

The relevance of the early twentieth-century retrenchment of disinterestedness and formalism to the development of environmental aesthetics involves the fact that a major theme of mid-twentieth-century analytic aesthetics was the rejection of both disinterestedness and formalism. The rejection began with the expressionist, and reached its climax with the institutional theory of art. The result was a change in the concept of aesthetic appreciation significant enough to be considered a paradigm shift: a change from the idea of disinterested contemplation of sensory and formal qualities of isolated objects of art to a new paradigm of emotionally and cognitively rich engagement with cultural artifacts, intentionally created by designing intellects, informed by art-historical traditions and art-critical practices and embedded in a complex, many-faceted artworld. The relevance of this paradigm shift to the development of environmental aesthetics lies in the fact that the new paradigm was tailored exclusively to suit art appreciation. The resources introduced to replace disinterestedness and formalism – designing intellects, art-historical traditions, art-critical practices and the artworld itself – seemingly have little if any application to appreciation of anything other than art. Thus, aesthetic appreciation of the world beyond the artworld was left behind, involving only distanced contemplation of sensory and formal qualities.

In the second half of the twentieth century, this state of affairs expressed itself in two developments, which constitute the immediate background to the rise of environmental aesthetics. The first was that in its enthusiasm for the new paradigm of aesthetic appreciation, analytic aesthetics completely abandoned any remaining interest in the aesthetics of anything other than art. The abandonment was institutionalized by essentially equating philosophical aesthetics with philosophy of art. The key textbook in the field was subtitled *Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* and the two major anthologies bore the titles *Philosophy Looks at the Arts* and *Art and Philosophy*. With a total of 1,527 pages, none of these three volumes, each a classic of its kind, even mentioned the aesthetics of nature. Moreover, when nature was alluded to by analytic aestheticians, its appreciation was typically treated as subjective and, in comparison with that of art, of less theoretical interest. This was in part just because nature lacks key features of the new paradigm, such as designing intellects, art-historical traditions and art-critical practices, that were taken to give art appreciation both objectivity and philosophical interest. This development reached an extreme in the view that not only is philosophical aesthetics no more than philosophy of art, but, moreover, aesthetic appreciation itself is limited to art and appreciation of nature is simply not aesthetic appreciation (Elliot 1982).

The second development constituting the immediate background to the rise of environmental aesthetics involved the real world beyond both philosophical aesthetics and the artworld. It related to a new public awareness of the aesthetic quality of the environment that began to evolve early in the second half of the twentieth century (Lewis *et al.* 1973). The awareness caused a difficulty, since, given the developments in philosophical aesthetics, individuals concerned about the aesthetics of the world at large had few theoretical resources other than the old paradigm of distanced contemplation of sensory and formal qualities. This had two ramifications. First, those charged with addressing concerns about the aesthetic state of the environment, such as landscape architects, environmental planners and landscape assessors, embraced assessment, planning and design approaches that focused primarily on sensory and formal qualities of scenic views (Litton 1968; USDA Forest Service 1972). Second, individuals who can be characterized, at least in part, as environmentalists expressed doubts about both the old paradigm and its utilization in landscape management. Some saw it as inappropriately accentuating scenic landscapes to the exclusion of other environments (Leopold 1966). Others, suspecting that aesthetic appreciation of nature is inherently subjective and trivial, flirted with the idea that it has little positive or even negative impact on environmental issues (Shepard 1967).

The rise of environmental aesthetics

Environmental aesthetics was initially a response to these two developments. It originated in a renewed interest in the aesthetics of nature that surfaced after the mid-twentieth century. The renewal was launched in part by Ronald Hepburn's classic essay "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty" (1966). Reacting to the treatment of appreciation of nature within analytic aesthetics, Hepburn argued that those features that other philosophers viewed as aesthetic deficiencies in

the natural world, and thus as reasons for deeming its appreciation trivial, subjective and/or even nonaesthetic, are actually sources of a different kind of very rich aesthetic experience. He emphasized that since the natural world is not constrained by features such as designing intellects, art-historical traditions and art-critical practices, it facilitates an open, engaging and creative mode of appreciation. However, he also demonstrated that there is in appreciation of nature, as in appreciation of art, a movement from trivial to serious aesthetic experience, arguing that if serious aesthetic experience of nature is to be achieved, then open, engaging, creative appreciation must be guided by realizations about the nature of the natural world. Thus, Hepburn addressed both the apparent differences between art and nature concerning aesthetic appreciation and the limiting of appreciation of nature to distanced contemplation of sensory and formal qualities. In stressing the openness of natural environments as well as the significance of understanding them, he laid the foundation for environmental aesthetics.

After Hepburn's essay, the renewed interest in the aesthetics of nature progressed in two directions, applied and philosophical. Some of the relatively early research on the applied side involved the critique of empirical work done in response to the growing public concern about the aesthetic quality of environments. The critique paralleled Hepburn's concern about the assumption that appreciation of nature is little more than distanced contemplation of sensory and formal qualities. For example, it was argued that assessment and planning techniques used in practical management of natural landscapes were inadequate in being fixated on picturesque scenery and committed to formalism, and that in general the public debate over the aesthetic state of environments presupposed a narrow, formalist idea of aesthetic quality (Carlson 1976, 1977). Appleton identified similar problems and attributed them to a lack of adequate theoretical work, charging that empirical research was pursued in what he termed a "theoretical vacuum" (1975b). The call to fill this vacuum resulted in various responses: attempts to provide sociobiological underpinnings for aesthetic appreciation of nature, such as prospect-refuge theory (Appleton 1975a), as well as a range of theoretical models of aesthetic response grounded in, for example, developmental and environmental psychology. There are overviews and collections of the research of this period (Sadler and Carlson 1982; Saarinen *et al*. 1984; Zube 1984; Cats-Baril and Gibson 1986; Nasar 1988; Bourassa 1991). In addition, there are more recent attempts to forge links between empirical or applied research and philosophical work in environmental aesthetics (Carlson 1990, 1993b; Eaton 1997b; Nassauer 1997; Saito 2002, 2007b; Brady 2003; Sepänmaa 2010).

The initial philosophical research following from the renewed interest in the aesthetics of nature falls into two groups. Each was foreshadowed by a central theme in Hepburn's seminal article and each involves a reaction to an aspect of the old paradigm of aesthetic appreciation of nature as distanced contemplation of sensory and formal qualities. One is a direct response to the traditional idea of aesthetic appreciation as disinterested and can be related to Hepburn's suggestion that nature facilitates an open, engaging and creative mode of appreciation. The other is a reaction to the old paradigm's narrow focus on sensory and formal qualities and pursues Hepburn's insight that aesthetic appreciation of the natural world – although open, engaging and creative – must yet be guided by an understanding of its real nature.

The aesthetics of engagement and related views

The former of the two groups of philosophical research mirrors the rejection by analytic aesthetics of disinterestedness as central to aesthetic appreciation of art, which helped to clear the ground for the new paradigm of art appreciation. However, since the resources replacing disinterestedness seem appropriate only for art, the rejection of the distanced contemplation paradigm for the appreciation of nature requires further argument. Berleant addresses this issue by stressing similarities between appreciation of art and that of nature. He rejects not only disinterestedness but also various artworld-related dogmas that place art on a pedestal separating it from the world at large (1991). Thus, Berleant puts the issue on its head, modeling art appreciation on the open, engaging, creative appreciation facilitated by natural environments. He proposes what he terms the "aesthetics of engagement" for appreciation of both nature and art. The aesthetics of engagement advocates transcending traditional dichotomies, such as subject/object, and diminishing the distance between the appreciator and the appreciated, aiming at a total, multisensory immersion of the former within the latter, be it nature or art (1992). Moreover, the aesthetics of engagement is not limited to nature and art, but constitutes a model for aesthetic appreciation of any environment (1997, 2005). Thus, it is a major factor in shaping environmental aesthetics as a field not simply focusing on natural environments, but encompassing aesthetic appreciation of the world at large.

The aesthetics of engagement stresses immediate sensory involvement with any object of appreciation. Other positions in environmental aesthetics also emphasize this and related dimensions of aesthetic appreciation of natural environments, arguing that these dimensions, although not exhaustive of such appreciation, are nonetheless essential to it. For example, Carroll argues that the emotional arousal that nature often immediately and directly elicits is an important and legitimate aspect of its aesthetic appreciation (1993). An ineffable quality of the experience of nature is stressed by Godlovitch, who argues that nature is aloof and distant, evoking a sense of mystery, of appreciative incomprehension (1994). Another possibility is suggested by Brady, who finds a central place for creative imagination in aesthetic appreciation of nature (1998, 2003). Other scholars emphasize the freedom and openness of aesthetic appreciation of nature in contrast to that of art (Fisher 1998; Budd 2002). In granting a central place to these kinds of responses, the aesthetics of engagement and related positions draw attention to important components of aesthetic experience. Nonetheless, they face several problems. They seemingly emphasize the trivial end of the spectrum from trivial to serious aesthetic appreciation noted by Hepburn (1966, 1993). As a result, they do not adequately address the worry that aesthetic appreciation is basically a trivial, subjective and/or possibly misleading approach to nature, and they open the possibility of reinstating the barrier between aesthetic appreciation of art and that of the rest of the world, for the former, given the new paradigm of art appreciation, clearly involves more than simply sensory, emotional or related responses. These and similar issues are debated from various perspectives (Carlson 1993a, 1995, 2005; Eaton 1998; Budd 2002; Parsons 2008a).

The cognitive approach

Addressing some of the problems faced by the engagement and related points of view requires pursuing Hepburn's other suggestion that, although aesthetic appreciation of the natural world may be open, engaging and creative, if it is to be serious rather than trivial it must be guided by knowledge and understanding. This insight is at the heart of the other initial line of philosophical research constituting the renewed interest in the aesthetics of nature. This approach focuses on cognitive dimensions of aesthetic appreciation and began as a response to the old appreciative paradigm's obsession with sensory and formal qualities. The line of thought grows from the realization that aesthetic appreciation of nature must also include awareness of symbolic and expressive qualities (Sagoff 1974; Carlson 1976). Consequently, it is argued that appreciation of nature must be freed from old approaches involving only formalistic appreciation of isolated objects or picturesque-influenced appreciation of scenic beauty (Carlson 1979). However, this necessitates neither reducing aesthetic appreciation of nature simply to sensory and emotional responses nor abandoning it to trivial subjectivism (Carlson 1981). Rather, analogous to the way in which, under the new paradigm of art appreciation, serious, appropriate aesthetic appreciation of art is cognitively informed by art-historical traditions and art-critical practices, aesthetic appreciation of nature, in order to be equally serious and appropriate, must be cognitively informed by natural-historical and scientific information. Thus, an essential place in aesthetic appreciation of the natural world is found for knowledge provided by sciences such as geology, biology and ecology (Carlson 1979, 1981, 2000). This view has become known as scientific cognitivism.

The idea of grounding appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature in scientific knowledge has proved fruitful in several ways. It is interpreted as an "ecological aesthetic" in the tradition of Aldo Leopold, who linked the beauty of nature to its ecological integrity and stability (Leopold 1966; Callicott 2008), and it is favored by philosophers concerned to find support in aesthetic appreciation of nature for maintaining ecological well-being (Rolston 1995, 2002; Eaton 1997a 1998; Saito 1998b; Matthews 2002; Lintott 2006). It also provides a cognitive framework for landscape assessors and planners addressing concerns about aesthetic quality of environments and thus assists in filling the so-called theoretical vacuum (Carlson 1993b). In addition, the cognitive approach has ramifications for the view known as "positive aesthetics," which holds that untouched, pristine nature has only or primarily positive aesthetic qualities. Although somewhat counterintuitive, this view is defended by certain environmental philosophers (Rolston 1988; Hargrove 1989; Carlson 2006). It is argued by some that linking appreciation of nature to scientific knowledge explains how positive aesthetic appreciation is nurtured by a scientific worldview that increasingly interprets the natural world as having positive aesthetic qualities, such as order, balance, unity and harmony (Carlson 1984). Others see the relationship somewhat conversely, arguing that positive aesthetics must be assumed, in which case it provides support for scientific cognitivism (Parsons 2002). Nonetheless, a number of philosophers find positive aesthetics problematic, either since it appears to undercut comparative assessments thought necessary for environmental planning or because the view itself seems unintuitive, obscure and/or inadequately justified

(Thompson 1995; Godlovitch 1998; Saito 1998a; Budd 2002; Simus 2008). Moreover, the core idea that scientific knowledge is the primary information relevant to appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature is debated from various perspectives (Saito 1984; Carroll 1993; Godlovitch 1994; Stecker 1997; Brady 1998; Fisher 1998; Foster 1998; Heyd 2001; Zangwill 2001; Budd 2002; Carlson and Berleant 2004; Leddy 2005).

Environmental aesthetics and environmentalism

The relationships between environmentalism and the ideas and positions that have become contemporary environmental aesthetics have sources in the aesthetics of nature developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Early environmental movements, especially in North America, were largely fueled by aesthetic appreciation shaped by both the notion of the picturesque and the ideas (central in contemporary positive aesthetics) of thinkers such as John Muir. However, as noted, even before the rise of environmental aesthetics, some individuals, who can be characterized as environmentalists, had doubts about the old paradigm of aesthetic appreciation of nature (Leopold 1966; Shepard 1967). Recently the relationships between aesthetic appreciation and environmentalism have been subjected to more scrutiny (Carlson 2010). Some individuals do not believe that aesthetics can provide adequate grounding for environmental ethics (Loftis 2003). The problem is especially acute concerning environments, such as wetlands, that do not fit traditional conceptions of scenic beauty (Callicott 2003). In line with earlier criticisms that empirical work in landscape assessment was focused only on the scenic (Carlson 1977, 1979), much of the historical tradition concerning aesthetic appreciation of nature has been called into question. Various ideas, such as appreciation tied to the notion of the picturesque, are criticized on several grounds: as morally vacuous, anthropocentric, subjective, scenery-obsessed and/or trivial (Andrews 1989; Godlovitch 1994; Thompson 1995; Rolston 1998; Saito 1998a; Callicott 2008). Similarly, in accord with the aesthetics of engagement's critique of disinterestedness (Berleant 1991, 1992), some find that concept to be questionable from an environmental standpoint (Rolston 1998).

There are several responses to these criticisms of the traditional paradigm of aesthetic appreciation of nature and the notions of disinterestedness and the picturesque. Some reassess and defend the picturesque tradition (Brook 2008), while others suggest that, although the idea of the picturesque may be questionable, the theory of disinterestedness is yet essential, since without it the notion of the aesthetic itself lacks conceptual grounding (Carlson 1993a; Budd 2002). Other philosophers claim that an analysis of aesthetic experience in terms of disinterestedness helps to meet concerns that traditional aesthetics is anthropocentric and subjective, since such an analysis supports the objectivity of aesthetic judgments (Brady 2003). The charge of anthropocentricity is also addressed by the mystery approach, which attempts to give aesthetic appreciation of nature an "acentric" basis (Godlovitch 1994). Similarly, the resources of related positions, especially the aesthetics of engagement, are taken to counter criticism that, due to ideas such as the picturesque, aesthetic experience of nature must be both anthropocentric and scenery obsessed (Rolston 1998). Cognitive

accounts also furnish replies to some of these charges. As noted, scientific cognitivism is interpreted as an "ecological aesthetic." Given its focus on scientific knowledge and objectivity, it is claimed to help counter the worry that aesthetic appreciation of environments is trivial and subjective and thus of little significance in environmental protection (Parsons 2006; Hettinger 2005). Other philosophers pursue the possibility of what is sometimes called "green aesthetics," which attempts to bring aesthetic and ecological values in line with one another (Eaton 1997a; Lintott 2006; Saito 2007b). In general, the relationship between environmental aesthetics and environmentalism continues to be a source of discussion and debate (Brady 2003, 2006a; Carlson and Lintott 2008; Parsons 2008a; Carlson 2010).

The aesthetics of human environments and everyday life

More recently, various approaches in environmental aesthetics have expanded from their initial focus on natural environments to consider human and human-influenced environments as well as the experiences and activities of everyday life. Both cognitive and other accounts pursue the aesthetic investigation of these areas. Cognitive positions hold that appropriate aesthetic appreciation of human environments, like that of natural environments, depends on knowledge of what something is, what it is like and why it is as it is. Thus, relevant to appropriate appreciation of human environments is information about their histories, their functions and their roles in human life (Carlson 1985, 2001a, 2009; Parsons and Carlson 2008). In such cases, it is argued that knowledge provided by social science is as relevant to appropriate aesthetic appreciation as that given by natural science (Carlson 2009). Some researchers also stress, as they do in the case of natural environments, the aesthetic potential of cultural traditions in the experience of human environments. Saito, Sepänmaa and others argue that ideas and images from folklore, mythology and religion frequently play a significant role in aesthetic experience of peoples' own home landscapes (Saito 1985, 1998b; Sepänmaa 1993; Carlson 2000, 2009; Heyd 2001). Other approaches also provide several channels for exploring the aesthetics of human environments and especially of everyday life. Berleant presents the engagement view as a model for aesthetic appreciation of not simply both nature and art, but also just about everything else; he studies aesthetic dimensions of small towns, large cities, theme parks, museums and human relationships (1997, 2005, 2010). Likewise, Brady's imagination-influenced work helps in understanding aesthetic responses not only to the enjoyment of, but also to the use and abuse of, various environments (2003, 2006b).

There are also fruitful approaches to the aesthetics of human environments and everyday life in positions that forge connections among diverse points of view. Numerous studies, without being totally of one orientation or another, inform the understanding of the appreciation of human environments, such as rural landscapes and urban cityscapes as well as more specialized environments, for instance industrial sites or shopping centers (von Bonsdorff and Haapala 1999; Berleant and Carlson 2007; Arntzen and Brady 2008). Beyond the consideration of large, public environments, the aesthetics of everyday life becomes especially important. Saito, Leddy and others investigate not only the aesthetic qualities of smaller, more personal environments,

such as individual living spaces like yards and houses, but also aesthetic dimensions of normal day-to-day experiences (Saito 2001, 2007a; Berleant 2002, 2010; Irvin 2008; Leddy 2012). Everyday activities such as playing sports and dining are also examined (Light and Smith 2005). With the aesthetics of everyday life, environmental aesthetics begins to connect with traditional aesthetics, making contact with the philosophy of borderline art forms, not only the "arts" of sports and cuisine, but also the art of gardening (Miller 1993; Ross 1998; Cooper 2006; Parsons 2008a) and the arts of landscaping, designing and building (Carlson 1986, 2000, 2009; Stecker 1999; Saito 2002; Parsons 2008b, 2011).

Current and future environmental aesthetics

What is the current state and future direction of environmental aesthetics? In light of recent research concerning environmentalism, the aesthetics of human environments and everyday aesthetics, it seems that much current work, rather than emphasizing one particular model of aesthetic experience, attempts to constructively bring together resources from several different points of view (Eaton 1997a; Nassauer 1997; Carlson 2001b, 2007, 2010; Lintott 2006; Moore 2008). For example, there are efforts to combine cognitive accounts with other positions, such as the imagination-based approach (Fudge 2001) or the aesthetics of engagement (Rolston 1998, 2002). In addition, some researchers explore the relevance to environmental aesthetics of other areas of philosophy, such as philosophy of biology or feminist theory (Parsons and Carlson 2008; Lintott 2010). All such work helps shape the future direction of environmental aesthetics (Saito 2010; Sepänmaa 2010; Drenthen and Keulartz forthcoming). These innovative, eclectic approaches may be the most successful not only in fostering a deeper appreciation of the aesthetic potential of the world in which we live, but also in demonstrating that the different environments of that world can be as aesthetically rich and rewarding as are the very best works of art.

See also Kant (Chapter 5), Formalism (Chapter 9), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Beauty (Chapter 29), Architecture (Chapter 60).

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48
FEMINIST AESTHETICS

Karen Hanson

Feminism can inflect aesthetics in a variety of ways. This is not merely because feminism, as a political outlook or program, may take a number of forms, though this is surely true and relevant. But because "aesthetics" may mean the branch of philosophy dealing with the creation, nature and reception of art, or a theory of beauty and its appreciation, or the study of sensuous perception, so "feminist aesthetics" may convey, among other possibilities, the practice of searching for and remedying the exclusion of women from the history of art, or the critical examination of aesthetic terms and theories for male bias, or the development of alternative, "woman-centered" accounts of art, its creation and its effects, or the interjection of gender-sensitivity into accounts of sensuous perception. Feminist aesthetics may challenge or it may supplement other aesthetic traditions, methodologies and conclusions, and various versions of feminist aesthetics may be at odds with one another.

Similar goals, different theories – the essentialist controversy

Consider some feminist attempts to undermine the canons of art history and to question the distinctions between high and low art and between art and craft. One scholar may search for underappreciated or insufficiently credited women artists, another may critically examine genre hierarchies, and others may take an interest in fiber arts – in quilting, weaving, lacemaking – or other decorative or domestic arts that have been, in the main, the province of women. All these inquirers may be motivated by a sense that women have been inappropriately ignored in the story of art, and these scholarly activities may be guided by hopes that some form of equality can be secured for women – equal attention, equal appreciation, equal respect. If a large number of women artists can be discovered and they can be evaluated in the same critical terms as their male counterparts, the task of recovery seems straightforward. This might be understood as canon supplementation, rather than reformation.

But suppose the search for women artists does not turn up many overlooked or somehow forgotten great female painters. New strategies of appraisal might be called for. But if the case for equal respect has to be made on new grounds, if it is to be argued, for example, that small paintings of flowers are as worthy as grand historical paintings or that a fine quilt has as much merit as a fine painting, then two different

paths appear open. One would involve a search for criteria of worth and merit that will bridge differences in media and genre. This is not an easy critical task. Along what single scale of evaluation do we place the history painting and the miniature, not to mention the symphony and the lullaby, the sculpture and the lace?

An alternative route rests content with the idea that there are different criteria of excellence to be applied, different qualities that make for excellence in each medium or genre. Thus, the quilt and the painting are acknowledged to be different in, say, their creators' aims, in issues of execution, in effects on observers, but both objects are, in their distinctive ways, truly excellent. And so are paintings of the bouquet and the battlefield victory equally great – each in its own way.

More women might thus come to be included in the history of art, but this mode of recovery elicits an internal feminist controversy. If women's art is still found predominantly in what, on the traditional hierarchies, would be regarded as the lower arts, or minor forms, or decoration or craft, then some form of meta-aesthetic equality must be asserted or the aim of equal honor seems out of reach. If the traditional hierarchy is abandoned, however, and what women have produced is valorized through identification of its distinctive qualities – whether of style, form, content or medium – and those features are then identified and celebrated as feminine, a particular form of equality could be achieved. This would allow equal honor through the recognition of difference. It would be grounded on the idea that creativity itself is essentially gendered.

This is an acceptable idea for some feminists. A major fulcrum of feminist scholarship is attention to the operation of gender in the affairs of humankind, so the idea that artistic impulse and accomplishment might be gendered may seem a matter of course. But does the idea of feminine art carry with it the idea that female artists are inherently likely to produce such art or that the creative impulses of men and women are inherently different, sexually distinct? Again, some feminists are willing to embrace the idea that men and women have essentially different natures. For them, one major task of feminist aesthetics would be to identify and reevaluate the essential features of feminine art and the characteristically feminine responses to art and beauty. The idea is that art is produced out of the body, that men and women have different bodies, and so we should expect the artistic expressions of men and women to be different (see Cixous 1990; Irigaray 1992). In virtue of biology, men and women have different ways of being in the world, so their experience of the world, including their aesthetic experience, is likely to be different. Biological difference can ground an essentially different cultural tradition.

Many feminists are, however, suspicious of essentialist notions of the feminine. They argue that one of the lessons taught by attention to gender is that femininity is socially constructed and varies with time, place and material circumstances. This lesson would seem to undermine any prospect for an inherently feminine aesthetic, a distinctive set of principles of creation and appreciation separated not just from masculine forms, but also from historical context, geographical setting and social circumstance. The objection here is not just to the biological determinism that often lies behind gender essentialism, but also to the neglect of a variety of social factors that interact with biology. Is it not the case that women artists from a particular period and, say, country seem to produce work that bears a closer kinship to the

work of their male compatriots of that era than it does to the work of women temporally and geographically distant? Features of social context and historical situation may be argued to be equally determinative, along with biology; or determinism may be rejected altogether, in favor of an interactionist model of creativity. But so long as it is acknowledged that factors beyond biology play crucial roles in women's art-making and art appreciation, the prospects for a separate but coherent feminine cultural tradition seem doubtful.

Antiessentialist feminists may still be interested in feminizing the tradition, however, and their theoretical position does not preclude contributions to this project. Not only can these feminists join the search for women once thought minor artists and for women artists once greatly admired but now neglected. Their expectation is that coherent aesthetic standards, more fairly applied, would kindle – or renew – appreciation for many artists whom social forces have unfairly suppressed. And the antiessentialist can also attend to prospects for artistic expression in forms and in media distinct from those that are culturally dominant, forms and media more accessible to women and perhaps just because of that, undervalued. Only one reservation remains. The antiessentialist simply cannot accept the idea that women's art and women's experience of art is, through history and over geographical distance, always identifiably different from men's.

Transformations of the scholarly disciplines

The common attractiveness of the recovery projects suggests a robust research program for the history and the sociology of art and, indeed, in the last thirty years or so scholarship in these disciplines has accommodated significant feminist interventions. The infusion of feminism in these areas of research has been consonant with – has often been a part of – a more general historicizing of these fields. Race, class and gender have become familiar tools of criticism and analysis in literature, music, film and the fine arts. Studies of both the production and the reception of artworks have been organized by an assumption that material and social circumstances make a difference in what human beings aim to create and in how their creations are received or experienced.

That assumption, innocuous as it may seem, can have a transformative effect on art history and criticism. Linda Nochlin's "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971) is an exemplary attempt to urge precisely that transformation, from a feminist perspective. This article does much more than survey attempts to contest the obvious assumption of the title question. Nochlin does note with measured approval the projects to recover and rehabilitate forgotten or underrated women artists. She also recognizes the prima facie plausibility of the idea that women's situation and experience may produce a different *sort* of work, so that the terms of greatness could be bifurcated, indexed for gender – though she eventually rejects this tack as both empirically unsubstantiated and naive about the conditions of art.

It is in fact in looking closely at the conditions of art production and reception that Nochlin is led to a deeper contestation of the very terms of the title question. She offers reminders of the exclusions of women from the academies and studios,

sketches the historical facts and the likely effects of women's being denied access to nude models and life-drawing classes. She points to the obstacles of mentorship, the lack of family encouragement, the impediments to single-minded dedication. Nochlin might be thought to be applying to the field of the visual arts insights reminiscent of those expressed by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929). These chronicles of women's material and social disadvantages do provide explanations – even excuses – for there being no great women artists, but the detailed and sociologically informed historical accounts are meant to do even more than that.

Nochlin's title question seems to invite an investigation into one problem: what's wrong with women? But as we shift to investigate the conditions of art production more generally – the economic and familial circumstances that do or do not conduce to the making of art, the educational institutions and the systems of commerce involved in art, the reigning social mythologies at given points in the history of art, the salient aspects of relevant political systems and so on – the focus on the great artist is increasingly and decidedly blurred. The saliency of the idea of the great artist as an individual genius seems vitiated and the search for these individuals beside the point. If and when there is a more complete understanding of the production of art in general, then, Nochlin suggests, an inquiry into the production of great art might be more usefully pursued.

Nochlin thus calls into question art history's reliance on the idea of individual "genius" – the notion of the exceptional, autonomous, godlike creator – and she claims that art and its history will be better understood if this myth is abandoned. Her insistence that both the art and the art-maker occur in a social situation, with specific social dynamics mediated by specifiable social institutions, is meant to ground a fundamentally different approach to art history, one that does not begin with the assumption of the inferiority of women.

Feminism and modern European aesthetics

The assumption that material and social circumstances make a crucial difference not only in who creates art, but also in how artistic creations are experienced, may raise interesting questions for the core tradition of Western philosophical aesthetics, as well as for the history of art. Although Western philosophy of art extends back to Plato and beyond, aesthetics – as the philosophy of the beautiful in both art and nature, or the theory of the intrinsically valuable in sensuous perception – is usually thought to be of relatively recent origin, with most commentators citing Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (1961) as the denominating text and Kant as the seminal thinker. Whereas Plato, in the *Republic*, seemed to assume art and politics are intertwined, and he tried, then, to judge the merit of art at least partly in terms of its social effects and its service toward approved political ends, Kant's account of taste and judgments of beauty precisely severs these sorts of connections.

In the "Analytic of the Beautiful," in the *Critique of Judgment* (1987), Kant argues that judgments of beauty are subjective but universal. Taste, he says, is "the ability to judge an object, or a way of presenting it, by means of a liking or disliking *devoid of all interest*" (ibid.: §5). Judgments of taste are distinguished from judgments of the

pleasant and the good by being entirely contemplative, unconnected with any desire for the attainment, possession or even the existence of their objects. Because no interest of sense or of reason compels the satisfaction a person takes in the beautiful, as there are no private interests or inclinations that ground this pleasure, that person must, Kant says, "regard it as based on what he can presuppose in everyone" (ibid.: §6). The necessity of judgments of taste, their universal validity, requires a presupposition that there is a "common sense." This common sense is not to be understood as an external sense, nor yet as a common set of views or a common understanding. It is the "effect arising from the free play of our cognitive powers," and it must be assumed to be the same among all mankind (ibid.: §20).

But is it the same in womankind? Kant's account of these matters is cast in terms of abstract humanity, but a crude way of putting the most basic assumption driving the feminist research agenda is that gender makes a difference. A number of the key components of the Kantian account seem to leave little room for infusion of attention to gender difference. In particular, the idea that judgments of taste have universal validity precludes the possibility that our aesthetic judgments might vary by our sex – or by our race or ethnicity, age, class, nationality or cultural or historical milieu. The description of the pleasure that is distinctly aesthetic – satisfaction that is pure, free, disinterested – does not encourage an inquiry into whether this is a pleasure that is evenly divided between the sexes or whether this kind of satisfaction in fact covertly serves particular gender interests.

Disinterestedness

In fact, the idea that aesthetic judgment is disinterested has come under particular suspicion from feminists. The notion of disinterest had done philosophical work in aesthetics before Kant (e.g. in Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Addison and Alison) and it continues to play a role, sometimes covert, in a variety of contemporary contexts. (It can bolster the prospects for formalist criticism, for example, or stand behind some "presentationalist" theories of the art object.) The coherence and the tenability of the notion of disinterestedness are relevant to debates about the relation between art and politics, art and ethics, and art and nature – debates in which feminists have taken a keen interest. It is then not solely, or even primarily, the Kantian version of this idea that has been a target for feminists. In the twentieth century, the most prominent use of the idea of disinterest was in theories of "the aesthetic attitude," and these have certainly drawn feminist attention.

Aesthetic attitude theories suggest disinterest as a stance, perhaps the stance, required for aesthetic appreciation, perhaps even for the emergence of aesthetic properties. A 1912 paper by Edward Bullough, delineating a phenomenon he calls "psychical distance," played an important role in the development of these theories. Bullough described psychical distance as a phenomenon with both a negative, inhibitory side – the loss of our practical and personal interests – and a positive side – the elaboration of experience suddenly made possible by this inhibition of our practical attitudes and personal concerns. Psychical distance is, he claimed, the distinguishing characteristic of an aesthetic consciousness, crucial for the appreciation of art. We

achieve psychical distance by disconnecting the object of our attention – a play, a painting, even a fog at sea – from our selves, from our particular needs and affections. Distance is also, according to Bullough, what makes the aesthetic object *an end in itself*, and thus this achievement of consciousness is the key to the intrinsic value ascribed to art.

There are elements of Bullough's theory and subsequent aesthetic attitude theories that can be attractive to some strains of feminism. There is a hint of egalitarianism in the suggestion that the aesthetic attitude can be turned on any object. Humble objects of domestic decoration may be its focus. High art does not necessarily compel its exercise. The distinctions between art and craft, high and low art, have no immediacy in these theories' accounts of value. Aesthetic value depends upon a subjective change, a shift in *consciousness*, and that shift scatters all traces of these traditional – and some would say oppressive – intellectual categories and classifications. All considerations of use or uselessness are likewise supposed to slip away in distinctively aesthetic perception.

For other feminists, a requirement of disengaged quiescence is not an attractive prospect. They may find value in politically engaged or activist art, and they may find implausible the suggestion that the political aspect of these works has no bearing on their aesthetic character or aesthetic value. Some feminists may indeed want to promote feminist concerns through art, and they will have difficulty accepting the idea that aesthetic value only emerges when those concerns are shed.

Some feminists will not believe all personal, political and moral concerns *can* be shed. Theories of the aesthetic attitude depend upon the idea of a neutral, impersonal subjectivity. Questions can arise about this idea, even if one does not subscribe to the idea that there is a distinctive feminine subjectivity or believe that experience is always shaped by one's sex. The aesthetic attitude seems to require a difficult combination of activity and passivity: actively finding the right psychical distance to let sensations be passively registered.

We are supposed not only to discard present worries and extraneous thoughts but also to disengage ourselves from our desires and fears, our needs and hopes. Can our affections, temperament and patterns of motivation be thus shed? If they can, does an operating consciousness remain?

Doubts about the extent to which consciousness can be thus stripped are readily generated, and if they point toward an alternative theory that aesthetic reception is always historically and personally situated, this sits comfortably with the basic feminist program of attention to gender. Some feminists go beyond doubts about the aesthetic attitude, however, toward deeper suspicion. They allege that disinterest is a cover. They contend that very particular, not universal, satisfactions are achieved through assumptions of distance and that these particular gratifications can be understood as male.

The male gaze

John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972) is not a direct contestation of the cogency of theories of the aesthetic attitude, but it is intended to undermine the idea of neutral observation and to call into question the possibility of perception – especially visual

perception – untainted by personal interest. Berger is equally insistent on the formative role, for perception, of social context and cultural structures of belief and privilege, and he casts his claims about perception to cover both seeing in ordinary life and in the experience of art. His own summary analysis of the social tradition in which he finds himself is that it is one in which "men act and women appear" (Berger 1972: 47). Given the shaping of social circumstances, women are and understand themselves to be proper objects of sight, and men are empowered to look. Because of men's power, women interiorize and superintend a sense of themselves as appearing to, being appraised and appreciated by others – ultimately, by men. Her consciousnesses thus divided, woman becomes at once the surveyor and the surveyed.

Berger finds this dynamic clearly revealed not only in daily life but also in the art-historical tradition with which he is most familiar, European oil painting, and, more specifically, in the nude. Here women are the principal recurrent subjects, turned into objects for male spectators. The nude seems to display herself, but what is conveyed is her willing submission to sight. The sexual protagonist is, Berger claims, generally outside the picture plane – the male spectator, owner, judge. The pleasure he takes in the sight of the nude is specifically masculine and decidedly sexual.

A similar line of thought has been enormously influential in feminist film theory. Laura Mulvey's (1975) work is central to this development and, once again, the starting assumption is that power differences in society have determinative repercussions for aesthetic experience. Mulvey asserts that the world is structured by sexual imbalance, and she finds the mechanisms of that imbalance reproduced in narrative film. The pleasures of this kind of film are not uniformly distributed, she claims. According to Mulvey, male spectators are positioned to enjoy the erotic impact of the female figures in these films, while simultaneously identifying with the agency that drives the narratives forward. This agency identification is usually through a film's central male character, the main controlling figure within the film, on Mulvey's account. The male viewer's identification with the male character allows a projection of the viewer's looking onto that of his screen surrogate, so that the power of the film's protagonist within the story is neatly aligned with the voyeuristic power the male viewer already enjoys. The effect is a sort of doubling of power, a virtual omnipotence for the male gaze.

These theories of the male gaze begin with claims about conditions of the real world – women's subordination to men, a cultural sorting of *activity* with masculinity and *passivity* with femininity – and they suggest that the experience of art may not escape the structures of thought and emotion wrought by those real-world conditions. If the real world were changed, if women were not subordinated to men, could the experience of these artworks be reclaimed for a universal disinterested satisfaction or, at least, for pleasures shaped by full gender parity? Is the theory of the male gaze supposed to capture something about us, as appreciators, or something about some genres of art, or something about both together?

Berger mentions "exceptional" nudes in the European oil tradition, paintings that resist the effort of the male gaze to objectify and possess. These are, he suggests, paintings of women truly loved by the painter, so that the subject's will and her intentions are not lost in the image, whatever her state of undress. Mulvey seems to find narrative films inherently problematic, but one wonders why there should not

be exceptions here, too – narrative films moved forward more equally, by equally active female characters. And why could the exceptions not become the rule?

The theoretical male gaze would also be discomfited if in the real world the sexual bifurcation of seeing goes out of date or proves even now to be too simple. If gender essentialism is rejected and we grant that men's experiences and masculine subjectivity can vary from place to place, time to time, person to person, then the force of the masculinity in the male gaze becomes more nebulous. If women do not always and everywhere, at every age, in every era, see themselves as seen, how can we predict with assurance a given woman's patterns of pleasure at the sight of a film?

Stereotypes and norms

Feminist aesthetics may seem recurrently torn between, on the one hand, attempts to secure an agenda focused on issues connected with women and directed toward the amelioration of women's status and, on the other, a set of substantive worries about the fixity and coherence of the very idea of "woman." There are live concerns with the way in which women have been ignored or mistreated by practices of art, art criticism and philosophy, but there are also justifiable hesitations in the face of remedies that may reproduce stereotypes or address incompletely – and thus reinforce – the problems of prior exclusions.

How do women create art? How do they experience it? What insights or tools of analysis do women bring to philosophical aesthetics? If these too simple questions are misconceived, it does not mean that a feminist agenda has no place in aesthetics. Alertness to issues of gender in this field – and to the potential for issues of gender – is itself a contribution and establishes a standpoint for repeated and productive departures. We may also find that within specific historical and cultural contexts there *are* distinctively gendered norms of artistic practice and reception that it would be worthwhile to explore and understand.

This would be a more empirical way of seeking universality in philosophical aesthetics. Kant's way of linking subjectivity and universality is striking and influential. But aesthetics in its modern European development had already, before Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, been focused centrally on subjectivity – empiricism was the dominant epistemology – and yet philosophers were still moved to attend to issues of normativity in subjective judgments.

Francis Hutcheson and David Hume both found ways of suggesting that, while judgments of taste may be subjective, some judgments are better than others: there are standards. They granted that there are differences among us in our natural endowment – acute versus deficient eyesight, for example – and we may be influenced by our education, customs and training. True critics for Hume are those who have "[s]trong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice" (1987). While feminists recognize, as Hume did, that it may be hard to discern who really possesses these virtues and advantages, and so it is a discouraging task to construct a standard of taste through Humean means, it is not impossible to imagine a socially and politically improved world in which actual men and actual women could contribute equally to these sorts

of standards. It is an open question whether any special agenda or content would then remain for feminist aesthetics, but that open question for the future should not be a present discouragement.

See also Empiricism (Chapter 4), Kant (Chapter 5), Formalism (Chapter 9), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Value of art (Chapter 28), Art and knowledge (Chapter 37), Art and ethics (Chapter 38), Film (Chapter 53), Painting (Chapter 57).

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49
ART AND RELIGION

Gordon Graham

In contemporary Western culture, science and religion are widely regarded as intellectual foes, the modern version of a much older tension between "reason" and "faith." By contrast, art and religion are almost equally widely regarded as spiritual allies, especially in the task of "re-enchanting" a world that science has stripped of its enchantment (to use Max Weber's celebrated terminology). The supposition that there is a natural affinity between the two rests in large part on their long historical association. And it is true that the histories of painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry and the history of religion are inextricably intertwined in most phases of Western culture since the advent of Christianity. Moreover, there is an even older connection between artistic creativity and religious practice. In Greece and Rome the most significant architectural constructions generally had some religious function; the ancient Hebrew psalms use poetry to extol the importance of singing as a form of worship; the Paleolithic cave paintings at Lascaux in France probably had a religious purpose (or so some experts contend).

At the same time, while this historical association is incontestable, it seems equally undeniable that since the seventeenth century the arts have both sought, and been obliged to seek, a significant measure of independence from religion. In part this was a result of Reformation anxieties about the spiritual dangers of sensuality, combined with the rise of alternative sources of patronage. It is notable that the "Golden Age" of Dutch painting took place in a country that was newly Protestant and increasingly prosperous. But in part, art's disentanglement from religion was also the outcome of a self-conscious striving for autonomy by artists themselves, an aspiration reflected in an increasing nineteenth-century appeal to the slogan "art for art's sake."

The resulting separation of art and religion in the early part of the twentieth century, though never complete, is evident nonetheless. It can be given diametrically opposing interpretations, however. From one point of view it is art's "coming of age"; from another it is art's spiritual evisceration. What is more, protagonists of both interpretations can point to precisely the same phenomenon – the emergence of "modern" art – as confirmatory evidence. For the first, abstract expressionism, minimalist music, free verse, etc., are manifestations of art's spiritual liberation from religious thraldom. For the second, the abandonment of representationalism, tonality and literary form come at the cost of losing point and purpose – a spiritual bankruptcy that, to some minds, can only be reversed by a renewed alliance with religion.

It is evident that any attempt to determine which (if either) is the correct interpretation of this intriguing history will have to engage in philosophical aesthetics. We need to know the proper nature of a thing in order to recognize both its perfection and its corruption. Accordingly, we can only determine whether modern art is the apotheosis or the death of the artistic tradition out of which it grew, if we are clear about the nature of art. On the other hand, philosophical aesthetics cannot reasonably be expected to produce a definitive resolution of the dispute. This is because how "art" is conceived will in part shape our understanding of its potential relation to religion. The most philosophical aesthetics can offer, then, is an exploration of some conceptual connections between art and religion, with the hope that uncovering them may serve to illuminate this radical disagreement. The aim of this chapter, consequently, is to review some of the most important influences in philosophical aesthetics and assess their implications for understanding the relation of art to religion.

Kant

There can be little doubt that the greatest influence on philosophical aesthetics in the modern period is Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). It might even be said that, although ancient philosophers wrote about beauty and art, it is Kant who originated philosophical aesthetics as it has come to be understood. Famously, it was his recognition that judgments of beauty have distinctive logical properties that caused Kant to follow his *Critiques* of pure and practical reason, with a third *Critique* devoted to "judgment" (2001 [1790/93]). By itself, this move had hugely important implications. If rational judgment in respect of beauty is neither theoretical nor practical, and is at the same time intrinsic to the phenomena of art, this immediately implies that "art" is a distinctive realm of mental activity, one that cannot properly be subsumed within either explanatory knowledge or practical deliberation.

This might seem something of a commonplace to contemporary opinion, though nowadays the distinctiveness of art is likely to be found in "feeling" and "expression." Nevertheless, Kant's aesthetic signified an important break with two hitherto widely held ideas – that art can express (and teach) religious doctrines, and that it can be employed to religious and ethical ends. If aesthetic judgment is not theoretical, artworks cannot embody theological truths. Consequently, paintings cannot serve as "tracts" for the illiterate, and the value of poetry cannot lie in the importance of its "message." But if it is also true, as Kant famously contends, that art is to be characterized as having "purposefulness without purpose," neither can it direct us to morally good deeds or edifying public worship.

Earlier eighteenth-century literary critics could hold – as Samuel Johnson expressly did – that the purpose of poetry is to "delight" and to "instruct." In this way, they believed, poetry could (and should) be morally improving. The same idea was relatively easily extended to the other arts, but the clear implication of Kant's philosophical aesthetic is that we are wrong to look to art for "instruction." Plainly this opens up a conceptual gap – possibly a chasm – between art and religion. If religion is to be true to its nature, it must teach us how to live well. When art (as Kant conceives it) is true to its nature, it eschews any ambition to teach us how to live.

Given the history of art, and the large number of acknowledged masterpieces that have religious subjects, Kant's contention would seem absurd if it were taken to imply that art could never have religious *content*. But this is not one of its implications. On the contrary, Kant introduces the concept of an "aesthetic idea" precisely in order to assert that beautiful art can have quasi-cognitive as well as sensuous content. When we contemplate a great representative work of art we do not merely delight in its appearance – color, shape, tone, organization and so on – as we might with an abstract. We also take pleasure in the profusion of thoughts and imaginings that it stimulates within us, usually by means of the people, places and events represented within it.

Kant finds aesthetic ideas at their most evident in the art of poetry, and he makes explicit reference to moral and religious concepts in this connection.

> The poet ventures to make sensible rational ideas of invisible beings, the kingdom of the blessed, the kingdom of hell, eternity, creation, etc., as well as to make that of which there are examples in experience, e.g., death, envy, and all sorts of vices, as well as love, fame, etc., sensible beyond the limits of experience, with a completeness that goes beyond anything of which there is an example in nature.
>
> (Kant 2000 [1793]: 192)

However, precisely because art makes these concepts "sensible beyond the limits of experience" it removes them from both the realms of the knowable and the deliberations of practical life. They are neither additions to knowledge nor instructions for living. Rather, they are objects of aesthetic contemplation.

The incompatibility of Kant's aesthetic with earlier assumptions about the relation of art to religion is evident. Yet it might be supposed that there nevertheless remains the possibility of a connection between the two, albeit a rather different one. This is the connection that can be forged by appeal to the concept of contemplation. The practice of contemplation is something in which, plausibly, both art and religion have an interest. The *vita contemplativa*, after all, is a very long-standing conception of true religion, a conception expressly endorsed by the medievals. Might aesthetic contemplation not assist, nor even figure in, religious contemplation?

It is indisputable that there are artworks that lend themselves to this interpretation. The ethereal sound of Gregorian chant, the sublime space of a Gothic cathedral, and the extraordinarily still beauty of Orthodox icons are regularly understood as beautiful works whose contemplation aids meditative spirituality. In all these instances, it might be said, "spirit" and "beauty" are so inextricably united that they can only be apprehended in a *single* act of contemplation that is properly described as *both* aesthetic and religious.

This contention can draw support from the observable fact that the icons of Eastern Orthodoxy are invariably very beautiful objects that are expressly made for use in worship, and that their role in worship is primarily as objects of contemplation. It is also plausible, if more debatable, to hold that the connection between their beauty and their spiritual value is not a purely contingent one – in comparison, say, to the beauty of a surgical instrument – which does seem entirely fortuitous to its

usefulness. But what should we make of the nature and function of icons? And to what extent can we generalize from this case? Let us leave aside the fact that "religious" works such as icons, Gregorian chants and Gothic cathedrals comprise a rather small proportion of the whole corpus that Western art has produced. The main point to be observed is not that they are relatively rare – which all truly great works of art may be expected to be – but that they are atypical in one very important respect: they are not works of "genius."

"Genius" in this sense is an eighteenth-century term to which Kant assigns a special role within his account of the aesthetic. Aesthetic contemplation does not need works of art. The free play of contemplative imagination can be sustained by the beautiful appearances that natural objects present (The rose is one of Kant's repeated examples.) So we need some way of distinguishing between the aesthetic in art and the aesthetic in nature. Kant thinks of artworks as the product of "genius." They are notably different from beautiful natural objects (as was observed earlier) by their sensuous presentation of "aesthetic ideas."

A further merit in Kant's concept of "genius" lies in the fact that it enables us to accommodate within his aesthetic another important phenomenon, namely artistic creativity. The beautiful objects that the world of nature contains are simply the welcome effect of physical and biological processes. Human artworks, by contrast, are the outcome of intentional endeavor. So, while there may be natural equivalents of great artworks, there is no natural equivalent of the great artist. What is widely known as "the artworld" comprises not only art objects, but creators – painters, composers, poets, playwrights and architects – whose intentionally constructed pictures, songs, stories and buildings prompt and sustain aesthetic judgment. Moreover, individuality of style provides the ground on which their artistic achievements are assessed.

The artworks that supposedly integrate aesthetic and religious contemplation do not really fit this conception of "genius." Gothic cathedrals were the work of many generations of builders, almost all of them unidentifiable. The most enduring Gregorian chants had no known composers, while icon writers (to use the proper term) work hard at subjecting their individuality to a precise discipline of both conception and method. These are not natural objects of beauty that simply sprang into existence. They are artifacts brought into existence by human beings. But they do not have the stamp of individual "genius." If Kant is right that created beauty is to be distinguished from natural beauty by the embodiment of "aesthetic ideas," then the "ideas" these artifacts embody are the product of cultural tradition, not individual creativity. If so, they are not paradigmatic of art as such, and accordingly cannot be appealed to as evidence of the intrinsic rapport between art and religion.

It would be possible to argue, of course, that such works are indeed the embodiment of "true" art, just because the modern aspiration to individuality of style and expression is the measure of art's decay. However, it is equally possible to argue to the contrary – that art's most valuable feature is the emergent realization of individual artistic creativity from a hitherto homogenous cultural repository. Furthermore, this contrary argument seems to present us with a rather more plausible interpretation of the history of art, since individual creativity is no latecomer to the scene that can be discounted as a "modern" aberration. Shakespeare, Wren, Rubens, Bach, Pope,

Austen, for example, were heralded as great artists long before anything that might be described as excessive post-Romantic individualism came to influence such assessments.

We may conclude as follows. There is an evident affinity between some religious artifacts and some works of art, and it is plausible to suppose that it arises from their both being thought valuable as objects of contemplation. Yet on reflection, it is easy to be misled by this congruence. More broadly, artworks are characteristically distinguished from merely beautiful objects by being the product of intentional artistic activity, which is to say the product of individual "genius," a "genius" that has no significant part to play in "religious" art – or so someone might contend.

For Kant, as we have noted, the mark of that genius is the ability to give sensual presentation to aesthetic "ideas." While the precise relation of these "ideas" to aesthetic judgment is not altogether clear, he is emphatic that the first must yield to the second. That is to say, an artwork might be overflowing with novel "ideas," but it is aesthetically successful only to the extent that it accords with contemplative "judgment." This leaves the superior aesthetic status of artworks over natural objects hard to explain, in my view, but for present purposes this complication can be left aside. There is a more telling difficulty with the concept of "aesthetic ideas."

Hegel

Consider some of Kant's own examples of the religious ideas to which artists can give sensuous presentation. These include hell, eternity and creation. It is true that such topics have frequently been the subject matter of paintings, poems, pieces of music and the like. The pertinent question here, however, is not their mere existence, but how their sensual presentation stands in relation to their role in theological doctrine and religious practice. According to Kant, aesthetic judgment is a matter of delighting in the profusion of thoughts that we are prompted to by such works, but if it truly is a matter of making "sensible" the "rational ideas of invisible beings," there must be more to it than this. And so there is, by his account; they take us "beyond the limits of experience, with a completeness that goes beyond anything of which there is an example in nature." What does "completeness" mean here? And how do we apprehend the *rationality* of these ideas?

In part I, chapter 1, of his *Lectures on Fine Art*, G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), with explicit reference to Kant, takes up the topic. He observes that ideally every artwork has a special unity, often described as "organic." This may be conceived of as a unity between freedom and necessity in just this sense: every element of an artwork should be necessary to it, while at the same time being the outcome of a wholly free exercise of the imagination. This is what makes art an important vehicle of (the human) Spirit, according to Hegel. Such unity is possible, however, only to the degree that "the sphere of the beautiful is withdrawn from the relativity of finite affairs and raised into the absolute realm of the Idea and its truth" (Hegel 1975 [1835]: 115). Hegel's language is somewhat perplexing, but in essence he means to agree with Kant that artistic presentations of love or envy, say (two more of Kant's examples), discard all the contingencies surrounding specific real-life instances, and

by this means achieve a kind of universal "completeness." Hegel, however, is quite willing to call this completeness Truth – in the sense of revelatory insight into the nature of "true" love, envy, death, etc. Indeed, for Hegel, art is a mode of creativity and experience in which Beauty and Truth are united. This unity enables us to transcend our strictly physical nature by embodying mind and emotion in sensuous matter, and thereby transforming the physically meaningless world into a spiritually meaningful one. In short, art is of special value, not because it provides us with pleasure or delight – though it may – but because it is a manifestation of Spirit in matter.

These references to spiritual meaning might suggest that Hegel's amplified and amended version of Kant's aesthetic ideas opens up a new way in which we might think of art and religion as allies. In a sense, this is indeed the case, but if Hegel is right, art is only one stage in the accomplishment of spiritual meaning. As such, it may be used by religion, but religion will ultimately discard it.

> [R]eligion makes use of art often enough to bring religious truth home to people's feelings or to symbolize it for the imagination … [T]he original true standing of art [is] as the first and immediate satisfaction of absolute spirit … [But] art has still a limit in itself and therefore passes over into higher forms of consciousness … [The] "after" in art consists in the fact that there dwells in the spirit the need to satisfy itself solely in its inner self as the true form for truth to take … [T]he next sphere, which transcends the realm of art, is religion.
>
> (Ibid.: 102–3)

Once more the language is perplexing, but we can take Hegel to mean that the spiritual element, which we may find in a work of art, is purified insofar as it can be grasped independently of the sensuous form that the artwork gives it. Hegel dwells at length, as Kant does not, on the distinctive features of various forms of art. His abstract account of the development of humanity as it ascends from the contingent tangibility of matter to the universal truth of Spirit, informs the descriptive hierarchy in which he arranges them – with architecture as the least spiritual (because most dependent on the material), through sculpture, painting and music, to poetry as the most spiritual (because the least dependent on the material). It is poetry, of course, that Kant cites as the most evident source of "aesthetic ideas." Hegel, with some plausibility, thinks that the spiritual development he is describing cannot stop at this stage. If we value great art because it transcends material particulars, we must also welcome its leaving dependence on sensual apprehension behind. We grasp the Truth in a beautiful object yet more adequately (which is to say "inwardly") if we see it with our mind's eye rather than our actual eye. Applied to religion, this means that we are more spiritually attuned when we are no longer reliant on "sensuous" presentations and can grasp the significance of heaven, hell, eternity and so on directly, a condition in which "the heart is permeated with what art makes objective as externally perceptible … [T]he subject so identifies himself with this content that it is its inner presence in ideas and depth of feeling which becomes the essential element" (ibid.: 104). The inwardness of religion, though, is not the final stopping place. The practice of worship which reflects this inwardness lacks self-understanding,

and awaits transformation into philosophy, at which point the mind or Spirit truly knows itself, freed from all the contingent constraints of matter since pure thought needs no matter for its realization.

It is in the light of this spiritual dialectic that Hegel arranges art forms into his hierarchy. Most people now find the dialectic and the hierarchy rather too far removed from the complex details of the actual cultural history on which they are based. It is worth observing, though, that with respect to the relation of art and religion, its general tenor accords with a significant current of thought within the twentieth-century artworld. Some artists and art theorists have come to think in terms that could be described as signaling the "end of art." "Modern" art has made much of an internally generated need to abandon traditional artistic values – beauty, representation, harmony, narrative and so on – in favor of abstraction, minimalism and the "conceptual." The express intention of the art of the avant-garde, accordingly, has been to "liberate" the visual and plastic arts from the supposedly confining sensuality of the media on which they have hitherto relied, and to use them instead as stimuli to a more inward awareness of the "ideas" that underlie them. *After the End of Art* is the title of Arthur C. Danto's Mellon Lectures for 1995. In these lectures Hegel receives extended treatment, and it is not fanciful to interpret Danto as advancing a broadly similar thesis. Danto finds great significance in the "art of the ready-made" in which artistry as it has hitherto been known is abandoned. This abandonment makes it possible for people lacking artistry to secure/express "meaning" in a way that was formerly reserved for high art. Insofar as the artists and individuals who think in this way are unwilling to dispense with sensual representation altogether, however, they may be said to be stopping short of philosophy – the intellectual grasp of meaningful ideas – and clinging to a more "religious" phase in which inwardness finds and expresses meaning through artistic symbols rather than the propositional structures characteristic of philosophical analysis and explanation (Danto 1995).

Nietzsche

For the most part, however, the developments that characterize "modern" art have been given a reverse interpretation by creative artists. Art is heralded as religion's spiritual successor in a secular world. Jacques Barzun charts "The Rise of Art as Religion" in the second of his 1974 Mellon Lectures, a rise made possible by the combination of Renaissance humanism, Protestant reformation and the progress of science (Barzun 1974). Barzun does not mention Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), but the same idea is to be found in Nietzsche's collection of aphorisms entitled *Human, All Too Human*.

> Art raises its head where religions decline … Growing enlightenment has shaken the dogmas of religion and generated a thorough mistrust of it; therefore feeling, forced out of the religious sphere by enlightenment, throws itself into art.
>
> (Nietzsche 2004 [1878]: 150)

In his conceptualization of art, however, Nietzsche, departs significantly from a supposition underlying both Kantian aesthetics and its Hegelian development. He rejects their implicit assumption that aesthetic engagement is essentially a state of mind, a supposition that sustains the inclination to link aesthetic and religious contemplation. For Kant, this state of mind is a "free play of the imagination" which works of art prompt in us. For Hegel it is a grasp of the "Idea" to which art gives sensual expression – a grasp that in some sense requires us to go beyond the sensual, in something like the manner "conceptual art" also supposes. There are important differences, of course, but if Nietzsche is right, they both overlook a significant distinction.

> Unlike all those who seek to infer the arts from a single principle, the necessary spring of life for every work of art, I shall fix my gaze on those two artistic deities of the Greeks, Apollo and Dionysus. For me they are vivid and concrete representations of two worlds of art, utterly different in their deepest essence and their highest aims.
>
> (Nietzsche 1993 [1886]: 76)

Nietzsche makes this remark in his earliest work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, where he claims that the religious character of ancient Greek tragedy was transformed over time by a series of changes that turned it from ritual into drama. A key part of this change was the gradual dominance of the art of image (the Apollonian) over the art of action (the Dionysian). In the former we contemplate a sensual presentation (looking at a painting, say), while in the latter we engage in participatory activity (singing a song, for example).

Whether Nietzsche's claims about ancient Greece are correct is not crucial here. His distinction between productive and performing arts is a very illuminating one, especially since painting is regularly taken as the paradigm of "high" art in general. The most compelling example of this tendency is to be found in the emergence of ballet during the eighteenth century. Dancing is something we *do*, but in ballet it is converted into something we *watch*. To classify ballet, but not folk dancing, as art is to give priority to the "Apollonian" conception. Similarly the identification of concert hall music as "art" music (a notable development over the same period) treats music as something to be listened to, rather than played. The performer thus becomes the means by which the composer produces specially valuable aural experiences for the listener, just as paint and canvas are the means painters use to present their visual creations.

However, an important counterexample powerfully militates against this movement of thought – J. S. Bach. One of the greatest musicians of all time, Bach does not fit the Apollonian model, and significantly was referred to as "God's craftsman." Most of Bach's compositions have a practical purpose – the worship of the church. His greatest works are not aesthetic objects to be contemplated, but liturgical occasions in which to engage. The *St Matthew Passion* and the B minor Mass can of course be abstracted from their liturgical contexts and turned into the art objects of the concert hall. This, though, robs them of the meaning that they originally had, and can still have.

With the example of Bach in mind, Nietzsche's distinction suggests a rather different connection between art and religion. Apollonian art provides experiences. Dionysian art informs activity. That is to say, it gives human actions the form of a song or a dance (for instance). Songs are meant to be sung – an obvious truth that is easy to overlook when we have German *Lieder* in mind as great examples of the "art" of song. But if we focus on a different range of examples – masses, hymns, anthems, oratorios – we can see that great musical works are essentially useful. Nor is this emphasis on practical use confined to music. Hymns and anthems have words, after all, and these are often masterly poetic compositions. In general, the accouterments of religious life – hymns, anthems, vestments, architecture and choreographed ceremonies – are all aesthetically useful objects. Nietzsche's appeal to the Dionysian impulse thus offers us a quite different account of the way in which art and religion may be united.

Collingwood

This objection is now likely to be raised: when religion makes use of art, art is denied the autonomous value that it ought to have. Art proper is for art's sake, and not for the sake of something else. The expression "art proper" is associated with the philosopher R. G. Collingwood (1889–1943). In *Principles of Art*, Collingwood distinguishes art proper from (among others) art as craft, which is to say, art that serves a purpose external to it, a category that includes "art as magic." Many artists and philosophers have drawn some such distinction (often in terms of "art" versus "design"), but since hymns, anthems and so on are not plausibly interpreted as *means* to some external end, it is Collingwood's concept of "art as magic" that is of special interest here.

Collingwood puts the rituals and symbols of public ceremony in this category. He expressly mentions marriages, funerals and hymns, and claims that with respect to these familiar religious phenomena, artistic excellence is not at a premium. "Regarded from a strictly aesthetic point of view, all these rituals are in general … mediocre … Hymn-tunes … do not as a rule inspire respect in a musician" (Collingwood 1974: 76). This contention is not as obviously true as Collingwood's confident assertion implies, but his real reason for excluding "magical" art from the realms of art proper has another source. Art as magic, he holds, has a different purpose to that of art proper. Its aim is to arouse emotion. What matters, consequently, is not its aesthetic quality, but its *efficacy*. A musically poor hymn can be as (and often more) effective in arousing and channeling joy or grief, as a musically fine one.

Let us suppose that this is correct. Even so, Collingwood overlooks another dimension. It is not *only* efficacy that matters, but fittingness. This is especially important with respect to religious rituals. National anthems rarely have much aesthetic merit. This does not matter if they nevertheless awaken patriotic feeling on the part of those who sing them. By contrast, religious rituals are not directed primarily at participants. "Ascribe to the Lord the honor due unto his name; bring offerings and come into his courts," Psalm 96 instructs the faithful. It is God (or the gods) to whom songs of praise are offered, and such "offerings" must be fitted for divine

presentation. The striving for artistic perfection can make them so in ways that it is hard to imagine anything else doing. Insofar as this is the mark of anthems, icons, statues, vestments, liturgies and sacred spaces, it unites artistic and religious activity in a Dionysian rather than an Apollonian spirit. The result is not to be classified as Collingwood's "magic." Its focus is the worship of God, not the emotion of the participants. This does not make the art purely instrumental, however. Anthems are not *means to* worship; they are constitutive of it.

We began by observing the long association of art and religion. Philosophical claims for art's autonomy tend to view its history as a struggle to shake off subservience to social and religious purposes, and secure its own purposes. Such a picture of art's past does indeed reflect an important part of its story. At the same time, there is a *continuing* engagement between religion and the arts that must be acknowledged and explained. Neither the Kantian nor the Hegelian aesthetic can do this satisfactorily. Ironically, it is Friedrich Nietzsche, Christianity's fiercest philosophical critic, who sets us on a more adequate path.

See also Kant (Chapter 5), Hegel (Chapter 6), Nietzsche (Chapter 8), Expressivism (Chapter 11), Benjamin (Chapter 15), Value of art (Chapter 28), Imagination and make-believe (Chapter 31).

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Part IV
THE INDIVIDUAL ARTS

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50
LITERATURE

Peter Lamarque

Delimiting "literature"

The term "literature" might seem so vague and contested as to be a blunt instrument in aesthetics. In its widest sense, it is applied to virtually all printed matter, as when we speak of the literature on the iPad. Other usages are narrower, implying a kind of value. Thus literature is seen as "belles-lettres" or "fine writing," wherever that might be found; it might include the King James Bible or Hume's *History of England*, as well as certain philosophical or theological treatises, and biographies, memoirs, letters, even some journalism. When Bertrand Russell and Winston Churchill received the Nobel Prize for Literature this second usage was assumed. A third usage is narrower still and brings us nearest to aesthetics. Here "literature" denotes "works of the imagination" and is largely a modern (post-eighteenth-century) innovation. Thus some, but not all, poems, novels, dramas, short stories, sagas, legends, satires, would be included, while more fact-oriented writing of the kind listed above would be excluded. This third usage is strictly a subclass of the second for the evaluative component of "literary merit" still applies. Not all works of the imagination are deemed to be "literature," in this sense, and much popular fiction or drama or light verse would not be so classified. Publishers have come to recognize a particular genre of fiction as "literary" fiction, in contrast to other genres, crime, fantasy, horror, war, science fiction, which are rarely classed as "literature." What these other genres are thought to lack, as well as "fine writing," is a kind of broader significance or seriousness, which is taken as a further essential mark of "imaginative literature" in its honorific sense.

Literature as art

This third application of "literature" – fine writing of an imaginative/creative kind imbued with significance/seriousness – engages with aesthetics for in this sense literature is classified as one of the high arts. Immediately the question arises whether there is any coherent unified concept here that includes prose fiction, poetry and drama, but excludes certain "nonliterary" species of these, and also excludes most nonfictional prose. There are worries about the principles of exclusion but even if these can be

settled, more or less, there remains a problem in the seeming heterogeneity of the "literary arts" under this conception. Up to the late seventeenth century the literary arts were more or less confined to poetry, which included not just the lyric and epic but also the great tragedies of Sophocles and Shakespeare. The advent of the novel (and prose drama) in the early eighteenth century complicated matters and led to the hybrid category of "imaginative literature" or "literature as art" spanning prose and verse. That poetry is one of the arts has seldom been challenged. However, critics in the nineteenth century were slow to adopt the idea of the novel as "art" (Henry James, not uncontroversially at the time – 1884 – wrote of "the art of fiction"), although few now would not acknowledge the novel as an art form. But is "literature" itself a single art form or a collection of only loosely connected forms? Later we shall address attempts to find unity in the conception.

Within aesthetics and the philosophy of art there has only fairly recently developed a comprehensive subbranch of the subject devoted to literature, namely "philosophy of literature" (John and Lopes 2003; Davies 2007; Lamarque 2008; Hagberg and Jost 2010; Schroeder 2010). Although there is broad consensus in this writing that literature belongs among the arts and indeed can be treated as a proper subject for aesthetics there is no settled opinion on how best to characterize literature nor how to resolve the numerous literature-specific questions that arise about it. Significantly, another trend is noticeable, namely attention given by philosophers to particular literary forms, including poetry (French *et al*. 2009; Gibson forthcoming), theater (Hamilton 2007) and the novel (Kivy 2011). It is conceivable that if these more specialist enquiries become established – the philosophy of poetry, the philosophy of theater, etc. – then pressure to secure some overarching conception of literature might diminish. This in turn might even weaken the need for a philosophy of literature as such.

Literary language

As language is the primary medium for works of literature it might seem reasonable to suppose that a characterization of literature (as art) might be possible by appeal to linguistic properties alone. There are numerous attempts along these lines. Broadly two kinds of approach are discernible: those that seek purely textual properties definitive of literature and those that seek distinctive discursive functions.

In the popular mind, "literary" language is contrasted with the "everyday" in being more ornate, structured or self-conscious. Formal textual "devices," in particular those associated with poetry, like meter, rhythm, alliteration, imagery and metaphor, are thought to be paradigmatic of the literary. Indeed these come to be associated with "fine writing" in the sense that underpins the very conception of literature as a kind of value. Not just surface textual properties have been invoked but also semantic ones. The New Critics of the 1940s and 1950s, including William Empson, Cleanth Brooks and W. K. Wimsatt, Jr, developed a battery of terms, related to meaning, which captured what they took to be the peculiarities of literary language: in particular, ambiguity, paradox, tension, irony. This approach was epitomized in the "semantic definition of literature" offered by the philosopher Monroe C. Beardsley, according

to which literature could be defined as a type of discourse with "semantic thickness," that is, exhibiting a high level of "implicit meaning" (Beardsley 1981: 126–27). However, while this account is not implausible when applied to poetry (especially modernist poetry), where complex layers of meaning are sought and enjoyed, it seems less applicable to other literary forms such as, say, the nineteenth-century realist novel.

An alternative thought, that the literary resides not in textual properties but in linguistic function, might seem more promising in accommodating the full variety of literature. I. A. Richards, in the 1920s, suggested that literature highlighted the "emotive" function of language, in contrast to the "referential" function exhibited by the sciences. Critics in the Russian and Czech "formalist" schools, also from the 1920s onwards, sought the essence of "literariness" in such notions as "defamiliarization" (Shklovsky), "foregrounding" (Mukařovský) or "the palpability of signs" (Jakobson). One prominent idea, which became integral to the later structuralist movement, was that literary language *draws attention to itself*, even to the point of becoming *self-referential*, rather than being a vehicle for describing the objective world (Barthes) (for selected writings from these theorists, see Selden 1988; for discussion, see Livingston 2003).

Nevertheless, in spite of capturing recognizable aspects of the literary, these text-based or functionalist accounts – and there are many other subtle variants – face fundamental difficulties. It is not clear that they serve to isolate the literary from the nonliterary: foregrounding, for example, appears in puns and obscenities, without becoming literary, and some literary works, notably some novels, deliberately eschew overt forms of "literariness." A deeper issue is whether the linguistic features identified are in any sense objectively present (or absent) or whether they merely reflect modes of reading or attention. All language has the potential for multiple meanings (all words accrue connotations) so perhaps we should ask not if the meanings are present in any given case but if they are relevant. Similarly it is possible with any text to give more attention to its mode of expression than to what it conveys. Such attention might seem gratuitous in ordinary conversational contexts but that does not entail that it is impossible. It could be argued that it is a mark of the literary that it invites attention to the features identified, in contrast to nonliterary contexts where no such invitation is assumed.

The institution of literature

What the discussion shows are the pitfalls in seeking distinctive linguistic properties that all and only literary works have in common. A somewhat different approach is to look at literature not in terms of shared intrinsic qualities but institutionally, giving focus to the role literary works play in a human practice (Olsen 1987; Lamarque 2008). An analogy is with units of currency. What gives a ten dollar bill its monetary value is not its value as a piece of printed paper (or its color, weight, size) but the function it performs within a social institution (the nation's banking system). Users of the currency recognize its range of uses and the conventional value vested in its material form. Without the institution there would be no units of currency (just bits of paper and metal, at best). Similarly, so this argument goes, there would be no literary

works without the "institution" of literature, that is, without established conventions for creating, appreciating and evaluating selected items of discourse. The mere existence of ornate or finely structured language does not constitute literature. Literary works are not "natural kinds" but institutional entities determined by social norms. If this is right then the task of the aesthetician is to identify the constitutive conventions of the institution, not in sociological but in analytical terms, rather as the philosopher of law studies the foundations of the practice of law (Lamarque 2008).

The enquiry must explore the roles assigned to texts, authors and readers within a "literary practice" or, using the Wittgensteinian idiom, how the literary "game" is played (Lamarque 2010). It might be thought that nothing sufficiently determinate could be said about this practice given the heterogeneity of literary works and responses to them. Yet if we focus on literature as *art*, attending to the broad constraints already mentioned – including the "imaginative/creative" aspect and "significance/seriousness" – we soon find that substantive indicators are discernible.

What is it to read a text "as literature" (Lamarque 2008)? First, as with all art, there is an expectation that the parts of a literary work cohere, more or less, into a unifying whole, that there is design or purposiveness in the elements. This does not rule out experimental forms that reject "closure" or play with disjointedness, for design can reside in apparent randomness. Second, it is expected that whatever the surface subject matter (story or image) there will be underlying themes of a broadly human interest ("significance"), indeed that reflection on the subject matter will elicit reflection on these broader themes. Third, there is an expectation that the work will reward imaginative exploration ("interpretation") which reveals the literary interest in the work, notably by showing how the themes are sustained or developed by the work's subject and design. Finally, the literary value of the work will emerge as a function of the three other features, that is, in relation to the rewards delivered by the work in these respects.

We can consider such a template as specifying at least some of the conventional attitudes and expectations which constitute the "practice" of literature (Olsen and Pettersson 2005). This approach has several advantages. By applying equally to the short lyric and the triple-decker novel, it accommodates the seemingly incommensurable variety of literary works. It abandons the search for a linguistic definition of literature but without sidelining the obvious centrality of language to literature. Literary works are linguistic artifacts and the aim of literary reading is to appreciate how linguistic properties – from poetic devices to narrative structure – are utilized to the end of presenting a coherent subject in a form capable of sustaining imaginative (thematic) significance. Just as there is no prescription in the template about what literary forms are available nor are restrictions placed on subject or thematic content.

Nevertheless, this broad sketch of the "literary institution" raises a number of further issues: about fictionality, about interpretation, about value.

Literature and fiction

One problem is that the account offered is not, on the face of it, able to distinguish our second and third senses of "literature." For do not the King James Bible or

Hume's *Treatise* also conform to the definition? They are "fine writing," imaginative, and of serious content; they have a purposive design, they develop themes of human interest, they are subject to interpretation, and are regarded as of high literary value. There are some who would welcome this inclusiveness. Others, though, insist that the imaginative component of literature, in the third sense, implies *fictionality* (Wellek and Warren 1973: 25), which would exclude nonfictional works like the *Treatise*.

Are literary works essentially *fictional*? No satisfactory answer can be given without an adequate conception of fiction, and that has proved remarkably elusive. "Fiction" can mean "false," or "unreal," or "invented," or "product of the imagination." It can have positive or negative connotations. Being false (not true to the facts) is not sufficient for fiction or else Aristotle's *Physics* and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* would, counterintuitively, be classed as fictional. Arguably fictions can be compatible with a high degree of literal truth, as with many historical novels. Nor does fiction, as normally understood, imply the presence of fictional (i.e. made-up) characters; again, not all historical novels have such.

Perhaps the best way of accounting for fictionality is not by appeal to falsehood or unreality or failure of reference but – as with literature – by reference to the intentions and attitudes of those who engage with fictions (Lamarque and Olsen 1994). Works of fiction encourage a certain kind of "cognitive detachment," in the sense that readers are invited not to *believe* in the literal truth of what they read but only to "make-believe" (Currie 1990; Davies 2007). Fictional works are imaginative not just in the sense that they emanate from the imagination but because they invite an imaginative response in those who read them.

What makes Hume's *Treatise* nonfictional, according to this account, is not its truth value but its primary purpose (Lamarque and Olsen 1994). Hume is making assertions, inviting our rational assent, hoping to affect our beliefs. So it is with histories, scientific tracts, essays and biographies. Fictional works might also seek to change our beliefs but the focus of their effort is make-believe, they aim to stir our imagination, to transport us into their own worlds.

The concepts of literature and fiction are not identical: the terms have different meanings and different extensions. "Literature" possesses an evaluative connotation not present in "fiction" and not all works of fiction are deemed to be literature. Nevertheless, there are connections, most evident when we recall what it is to attend to a work "as literature." To read Hume or Bede or the Bible "from a literary point of view" is different from reading them primarily as philosophy, history or religion. The literary reading attends to such matters as: the congruence of structure and content, the aptness of the linguistic qualities as a vehicle for a thematic vision, the way the parts cohere into an aesthetically satisfying whole. This is not the same as attention to rational persuasion, factual accuracy or theological doctrine. In fact it fits more naturally with the response invited by fictions: imaginative involvement, immersion in fictional worlds, emphasis on make-believe over belief.

What this suggests is that it is at least characteristic of literary works in our third sense, literature as art, that such works be read *as if they were fiction* (Lodge 1977: 6–8; Livingston 2003). Some paradigmatic literary works – Shakespearean comedy, the novels of Austen, Dickens and Trollope – display their fictionality overtly. Other

paradigmatic literature (usually poetry) – Shakespeare's sonnets or Wordsworth's *Prelude* – is much less obviously fictional, though can (perhaps should) be read as the projection of fictional personae rather than as unequivocally autobiographical.

Literature and truth

The question of whether literary works can convey special kinds of knowledge, wisdom or truth applies exclusively to the paradigmatic works, treated as fictions. There is no controversy over whether Hume's *Treatise* is a legitimate vehicle for truth. Historically the truth debate about literature concerned poetry, the nature and claims of "poetic truth." Again the debate is ancient. The issue exercised Plato because he confronted a standing assumption that the great tragedians (notably Sophocles) were moral teachers, somehow in competition with philosophers. Plato's worry was that the poets' methods of teaching – through mimesis or imitation – were less than fully rational and could beguile the unwary into beliefs that lacked rational (philosophical) foundation (Plato 2007: bk X). The Platonic thought that poetry (including drama) can be deceptive, dangerous and immoral has surfaced continuously through European history, promulgated by both church and state, prompting repeated "defenses of poetry" of which Sir Philip Sidney's and Percy Bysshe Shelley's are simply the most well known.

The standard defense against these charges was first aired by Plato's pupil Aristotle who argued that poetic drama, of a suitably structured kind, could both educate the emotions and transmit truths of a universal nature. In fact the truths that Aristotle associated with poetry – "the kinds of things a certain type of person will probably or necessarily say or do" (Aristotle 1984: 44) – seem curiously downbeat. It was left to the Romantic Shelley to express the highest aspirations for poetry, which "makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world" and "awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought" (Shelley 2003: 682).

One difficulty with the truth debate concerns just how narrowly (or broadly) truth is conceived in connection with poetry. It is generally agreed that poetic truth is not reducible to a species of scientific or empirical truth. But what then is it? Shelley revered the imagination as "the great instrument of moral good" and saw the cognitive worth of poetry in terms of "enlarg[ing] the circumference of the imagination" (ibid.). That notion fits well with the accounts given earlier of both literature and fiction. However, it does not force an interpretation in terms of "truth." The imagination could be enlarged without truths as such being imparted. Those modern aestheticians who have sought to redefine poetic truth have invariably relied on qualified conceptions of truth: "true to life" (Hospers 1958), or "authenticity" (Walsh 1969), or "knowing what it is like" (Novitz 1987), or even a kind of "transcendence" (Murdoch 1993: 86).

Behind these theories is the strong, and plausible, intuition that literary works have cognitive benefits, that we can learn as well as derive pleasure from them. It is debatable, though, whether the intuition is best captured by appeal to "truth" or even "knowledge." In Western culture these terms are so closely integrated into the

scientific enterprise that to suppose there is a kind of "imaginative truth" not accessible to science but revealed by art is only to court mystification. It seems wiser to focus on distinctively literary qualities. We have spoken of the presumption of "seriousness" in literature. Works can be judged morally serious, in terms of the themes they develop, the complexity of characterization, the psychological subtlety of motive and action, the coherence of any vision expressed, without being judged as literally true or false (Lamarque and Olsen 1994). Readers can learn and feel morally uplifted by having their imaginations stretched, without thereby acquiring new knowledge. Needless to say, though, the issue of "poetic truth" is still contested.

Criticism and interpretation

If the reading process integral to literature is not a search for truth, it is often thought to be a search for meaning. The idea of looking beyond the surface of a text to hidden meanings beneath came into prominence in biblical hermeneutics in the early Middle Ages when different levels – the literal, allegorical, tropological and analogical – were ascribed to scriptural meaning. The development of allegorical poetry – *The Faerie Queene*, *Divine Comedy*, *Pilgrim's Progress* – continued this scriptural tradition, themselves inviting "levels of interpretation." However, the idea that all literature, or literature per se, demands complex styles of interpretation is again relatively modern, accompanying the rise of hermeneutical methods in the human sciences and also the intellectual currents of psychoanalysis and Marxism.

By the 1920s many factors – the establishment of "English" on university syllabuses, the proliferation of popular culture, the eroding of a consensus on artistic value, the influence of positivism in the social sciences – created the felt need for a "new criticism" which could inject discipline, scientific method and objective judgment into critical practice. In Britain, I. A. Richards, T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis, in the United States John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, R. P. Blackmur, Cleanth Brooks and W. K. Wimsatt (among others) brought to bear on the essentially humanist tradition of nineteenth-century critical methods a new rigor, attention to detail and fine-grained linguistic analysis. A far-reaching revolution in critical practice was born; it took poetry as paradigmatic (Metaphysical, not Romantic, epitomized by Donne, Eliot and Pound), it treated individual works autonomously and ahistorically (as "verbal icons"), it was antipsychologistic and promoted the virtues of ambiguity, complexity and "organic unity."

A key tenet of the New Criticism was the exposure of an "intentional fallacy" in criticism (coined by Wimsatt and Beardsley 1976, although anticipated by C. S. Lewis and T. S. Eliot) and the insistence that an author's actual intentions have no final authority either in interpreting or evaluating a literary work. Although the doctrine of "autonomy" came to permeate the practice of critics, it has always remained controversial at a theoretical level. The critic E. D. Hirsch championed the opposite position, that authorial meaning must predominate in interpretation (Hirsch 1967), and subtle variants of these views have been developed (Iseminger 1992), notably a compromise "hypothetical intentionalism" which gives priority to the "best hypothetical attribution of [an author's intention], formed from the position of the intended

audience" (Levinson in Iseminger 1992: 224). The reason the debate drags on unresolved is that it occurs at a fault line between irreconcilable conceptions of literature: as vehicle of personal expression (Romanticism), as impersonal "imitation" of timeless truths (classicism), as pure linguistic artifact (modernism).

A recurrent danger in theoretical reflection on meaning in literature is to lose sight of distinctively literary aims and achievements. The perils of reductionism are widely manifested. It can occur, for example, in the intention debate as pursued by analytic philosophers, where nonliterary paradigms imported from the philosophy of language – conversation (Carroll in Iseminger 1992), utterance meaning (Stecker 1997: ch. 9) or metaphor (Beardsley 1981) – can seem to miss features of meaning that set literature apart (Lamarque 2008). It is evident too among post-structuralists who promote "the death of the author" (Barthes 1977), and give priority to "texts" (as undifferentiated *écriture* or writing) over "works." And it arises from the attempted assimilation of literature into wider theoretical frameworks, such as Marxism, psychoanalysis, structuralism, postmodernism and feminism, which in their different ways challenge the autonomy of literary qualities and seek to explain (or explain away) literary production and reception as mere instances of nonliterary political, psychological or social phenomena.

Literary value

There is no more controversial topic in literary studies than that of literary value, either the value assigned to particular works or that of literature itself. Criticism, as its name implies, has always involved value judgments, yet modern critics have been loath to make these explicit.

It is helpful to distinguish different levels of evaluation. At the base level there are judgments about specific details in a work: the aptness of phrase or image, the coherence of a scene, the predictability of plot development, the psychological insight into character, the obtrusiveness of narrative voice. To judge such an element a success or failure presupposes that significance has been assigned it in the work, under an interpretation. A segment that fulfills its assigned function poorly is weak, although there might be room for debate over what that function correctly is (hence even at this level there is a connection between evaluation and interpretation; Olsen 1987).

At the next level, value judgments can be made about whole works. These judgments are more likely to be considered controversial. For one thing, they are associated with the formation of "canons" or "great traditions" in literature; also they are prone to be dismissed as "matters of taste" or culturally conditioned. The question of the objectivity of aesthetic value judgments has been much debated, especially in the eighteenth century when the sources of "taste" became a defining issue in aesthetics. We will come to canon formation in a moment but first we should note that it is not obvious that the evaluations of whole works are of a different order from those of a work's components. Indeed the former judgments seem to presuppose the latter. A work with flaws at a structural or content-based level will not be the highest artistic achievement. Nor is it obvious that objective criteria are lacking for judging

literary works. Once a conception of literature is determined then evaluations will be based on the extent to which the constitutive conditions are satisfied. The account of literature as art already has evaluative criteria built into it: *fine* writing of an *imaginative/creative* nature bearing *significance/seriousness*. A valued literary work is one that rewards attention with these aims in mind.

It is one thing to state the criteria in general terms, another to make specific judgments. As Hume (1898) insisted, making aesthetic judgments calls for skill and discernment, experience and sensibility, while always leaving room for purely personal preferences. It is important to emphasize that judging a work for its literary value is not purely formalistic, not simply based on "poetic diction." As shown earlier, the "fine writing" aspect concerns not intrinsic qualities of "literariness" but the consonance of linguistic means to literary ends. The literary ends can be determined only through an interpretation which assigns symbolic, figurative or thematic significance to a work's elements. Aesthetic appreciation of literature can recognize no deep division of "form" and "content." The "seriousness" of the "content" must always be a function of the imaginative exploitation of linguistic means.

The question of "belief" still haunts discussions of literary value. How can works like the *Iliad*, the *Divine Comedy*, *The Faerie Queene* or *Paradise Lost* continue to command our attention when the intellectual presuppositions on which they rest are so remote from, even at odds with, those of our own time? And could a work that we find morally reprehensible be highly valued aesthetically? Arguably a work fails *aesthetically* if it elicits and cannot resolve a dissonance between its (informed) readers' beliefs and its own literary aims. Literary appreciation is sufficiently flexible to allow imaginative engagement with a work's themes under most underlying presuppositions (as in the works mentioned). But it cannot always do so – for example, confronting extreme moral dissonance – and then there is literary failure (Gaut 2007).

The account given presupposes a more or less stable conception of literature and broad agreement on the highly valued (canonical) works. For some literary theorists this stability and agreement are largely illusory and products of ideological conditioning. Their reasoning is partly that the aesthetic itself is not a universal category but deeply embedded in historical circumstance and partly that aesthetic criteria by no means exclusively determine canon formation. What counts as a canonical work, on this view, is a function not of inherently literary values but of quasi-political interests. Perhaps the best response to these sociological attacks on literary value is just to return to individual cases and demonstrate in detail the values they exhibit (Bloom 1994; Kermode 2004).

This takes us to the third and final level of literary evaluation, that of the "institution" of literature itself. On the institutionalist account, literary works owe their very existence to a social practice, so *ipso facto* the values of literature are also defined by, and internal to, the practice. But is the institution itself of value? Do we need the discriminations and modes of appreciation that it defines? Those who see literature merely as part of (an undesirable) ideology would reply negatively. By emphasizing rhetoric over literary criticism, texts over works, instrumental over intrinsic values, ideology over aesthetics, they reject not just the canon but the very concept of literature. Yet it is hard to imagine a culture without literary art, without a tradition of revered writings, without literary education.

It seems unlikely that recognition of an *art* of literature will cease altogether. A practice ends only when there are no more practitioners. But defenders of the humanistic values on which a literary education is based should not be complacent about its continued survival.

See also Plato (Chapter 1), Aristotle (Chapter 2), Empiricism (Chapter 4), Imagination and make-believe (Chapter 31), Fiction (Chapter 32), Narrative (Chapter 33), Criticism (Chapter 36), Art and knowledge (Chapter 37), Art and ethics (Chapter 38), Poetry (Chapter 51).

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51
POETRY

Peter Lamarque

In spite of being one of the oldest literary forms, and arguably the most universal, poetry has not attracted much direct attention from philosophers, in particular not from those working in analytical aesthetics in the past sixty or so years. It is not that contemporary philosophical aestheticians have neglected literature at large but their attention in that regard has mostly been to prose fiction and the problems it gives rise to concerning reference, truth and meaning. There are notable exceptions, of course, both ancient and modern. Aristotle's treatise on *Poetics* is a systematic philosophical exploration of poetry, so important in fact that it has yet to be superseded as such, while in modern times one of the founders of analytical aesthetics, Monroe C. Beardsley, devoted a sizeable proportion of his 1958 *magnum opus Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* to poetry. But, aside from these striking exceptions, the relative neglect cannot be disguised.

Why have philosophers neglected poetry? One clue is in terminology. The term "literature," designed to accommodate all the literary arts or "letters," including poetry, drama and the novel, is a post-eighteenth-century usage; prior to that, the generic term "poetry" had been used to cover most acknowledged literary forms. However, under this new labeling, poetry as such seemed to drop from view. So when contemporary philosophers have addressed "literature" – offering to define "literature" and to explore its distinctive values, moral, cognitive or aesthetic – they have tacitly taken poetry for granted under that heading and perhaps have assumed that poetry more narrowly conceived does not generate specific philosophical problems of its own. Indeed one of the key philosophical debates concerning (imaginative) literature, namely, its relation to philosophy with regard to knowledge and truth, a problem first raised by Plato, has been applied indifferently to poetry (in the classical debate) and to the novel (more recently).

The first important question, then, is whether poetry, comprising a subclass of literature, does pose significant philosophical problems in its own right. At first glance it might seem as if it does not. If we lump literary works, in the relevant sense, together as "works of the imagination" then it might seem that the actual form these works take, prose or verse, narrative or drama, even long or short, will not make a crucial difference to the issues that interest philosophers: for example, what kinds of values they exhibit and what "status" they hold among other modes of discourse. Furthermore, where poetry is thought to be distinct from other kinds of

literary productions, this is commonly attributed either to its formal devices like rhyme, meter, rhythm and alliteration, or to its unusually extensive uses of tropes such as metaphor, metonymy, irony or synecdoche. But, so the argument might run, the former do not raise particular issues for philosophy (they fall within their own field of study, prosody), and the latter are well treated by the philosophy of language or linguistics, so do not need specific philosophical attention aimed at their use in poetry.

It is arguable, though, that this dismissive approach is a mistake and that when given proper attention poetry in fact raises intriguing and important questions for philosophy, which are not merely applications of questions raised elsewhere. Significant issues, for example, might arise from such themes as paraphrasability, form–content unity, the primacy of experience in poetry, "semantic density" and questions about "poetic truth." To see whether such topics really do engage philosophical interest it might be best to introduce and give focus to them through two general questions of a kind familiar to aestheticians: What is distinctive about poetry among other art forms? and What are the specific values that poetry affords?

What is distinctive about poetry among the arts?

For those with even a rudimentary literary education it is usually not difficult to recognize poetry when shown it. Poems typically are laid out on the page in familiar ways, in stanzas, perhaps, and with shortened lines. Further inspection might reveal end-of-line rhymes, pronounced metrical patterns, a string of conventional "poetic" devices. Appearances of this kind are important, not least for triggering conventional expectations as to what kind of writing is being presented. But at a deeper level they are not a reliable guide to identifying poetry, and provide scant insight into what poetry is. Not all poems look like poems and things that look like poems might not be such. In any case, in the oral tradition it is sounds, not looks, that count.

Aristotle offered a rough and ready taxonomy of poetry, noting that poems might differ in their "means" (meter and rhythm), in their "objects" (people and actions represented) and in their "manner" (narrative or drama). This is helpful at least in showing some different dimensions under which poems might be differentiated: broadly, using modern terms, in their style or form, their content or subject matter, and their mode, even if one might suppose the latter to extend well beyond the narrative and the dramatic. Aristotle mentions some poetic forms: epic, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic and nomic, a list, again, that subsequent generations have extended exponentially. The problem of saying what is distinctive about poetry is initially compounded by recognition of the huge variety of forms that poems can take.

An important, if controversial, point made by Aristotle, in attempting to characterize poetry, is that merely being in verse is not sufficient for being poetry. He has something quite particular in mind: "Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common except their metre; and therefore, while it is right to call the one a poet, the other should rather be called a natural philosopher than a poet" (Aristotle 1984: 32). And later: "The difference between the historian and the poet is not that the one writes in prose and the other in verse; the work of Herodotus might be put into

verse, and in this metrical form it would be no less a kind of history" (and by implication not strictly "poetry") (Aristotle 1984: 43). It was a common practice in ancient Greece, indeed right through to the Middle Ages and beyond, to use verse forms as vehicles for history, philosophy and "science." Aristotle's suggestion seems to be that given the dominance of these other, as we might put it, discursive functions, the works are only misleadingly called "poetry." Thus the work of Empedocles, the scientist, lacks the character of "imitation" essential to poetry; and the important difference between historian and poet is that the former "tells of what has happened," while the latter describes "the kinds of things that might happen" (ibid.), regardless of whether they use metrical verse. Aristotle's point is controversial because one might suppose that a work could be both history (or science or philosophy) and poetry at the same time (Jarvis 2012); it seems fairly certain that Alexander Pope saw his *Essay on Man* (1734), written in rhyming couplets, as both philosophy and poetry.

Nevertheless, the distinction between poetry and verse is worth retaining. Not all poetry is in verse – "prose poems" are not – and not all verse counts as poetry. "Verse" is largely a value-neutral term while "poetry" has connotations of value, even granted that there can be good and bad poetry. Perhaps the distinction parallels, in certain respects, that between "fiction" and "literature," these also being different concepts with different extensions. Fiction is one mode in which literature is written and "fiction" is also value neutral. Poetry characteristically, although not essentially, is in verse form. Also "verse" contrasts readily with "prose" while, as with "prose poetry," poetry does not.

Another distinction worth heeding is that between poetry and "poetic language." The latter is by no means clearly defined but usually connotes writing, in any context, that is especially fine or stands out as striking or ornate, perhaps through using original metaphors or imagery or "devices" such as alliteration, rhyme or repetition. A piece of journalism, a politician's speech or a literary essay might contain poetic language in this sense, without any implication that the writing is poetry as such, at least in the narrow sense of constituting a "poem." More controversially, it might seem possible for genuine poetry not to contain poetic language or *only* poetic language in the sense in which that is commonly understood; William Wordsworth's resolve in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) to use "the language really spoken by men" was an attempt to move away from highly stylized "poetic" usage.

Definability

Can the distinctiveness of poetry be captured in a *definition*? There have been plenty of efforts, but they reveal not only how difficult an enterprise it is (saying something both substantial and accommodating of all examples) but how distorting implicit paradigms of poetry can be. The poet Percy Bysshe Shelley offers this:

> Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be "the expression of the imagination"; … poetry in a more restricted sense expresses those arrangements of language, and especially metrical language, which are created by that imperial faculty, whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man [i.e. the faculty of imagination].
>
> (Shelley 2003: 675, 677–78)

Shelley defines poetry in terms of both a function (expression) and formal feature (arrangements of language). But his rootedness in Romanticism colors his conception; not all poetry need be expressive, or even emanate from the imagination, and purely cerebral (or rational) poetry is not uncommon. But the idea that poetry is grounded in a certain kind of linguistic usage seems right, at a general level. Can it be made more precise?

One suggestion is this:

> the essence of poetry as an art is not so much that it is rhythmical (which all elevated language is) or that it is metrical (which not all poetry is, except by a considerable extension of the meaning of the word), as that it is *patterned* language … composition which has what is technically called "a repeat."
>
> (Mackail 1971: 2220)

This at least seems to afford the required level of generality. But is being "patterned" too general, letting in too much? Classical rhetoric is replete with examples of patterning by no means restricted to poetry. The idea that poetry is essentially connected to repetition has been subtly developed more recently:

> A poem is either (1) a verbal object relationally or intrinsically intended to belong in the poetic tradition, by following, transforming, or rejecting the repetition techniques that have characterized that tradition (nonnaive poetry-making), or (2) a verbal art object intrinsically intended to involve use of repetition schemes (naive poetry-making).
>
> (Ribeiro 2007: 193)

This definition is illuminating not just in its appeal to repetition but in making intention central, in particular an intention to draw in some way on the tradition of poetic writing. For one thing it suggests that no definition that merely mentions formal qualities of language (such as being "patterned" or involving repetition) will suffice on its own. But at a deeper level it suggests that what is distinctive about poetry is not some intrinsic quality of the language but its embeddedness in a practice, which in a sense makes poetry possible. Whatever a poem might look (or sound) like, if we take it as a poem we bring to it a certain kind of attention as broadly determined by the long-standing poetic tradition. We assume, for example, that the surface language itself has a certain kind of salience, that its physical textures, sound, rhythm, meter, repetitions, rhymes, are not merely incidental but integral to, and demanding of, our attention, to be savored in their own right, not just to be vehicles for a message imparted. If we know this is what is intended then our responses are shaped accordingly. What makes something poetry, then, according to this broader conception, ultimately rests on its role in a practice involving the intentions of writers and the expectations of readers. Of course the principles of that practice would need careful spelling out but, arguably, such an "institutional" account (Lamarque 2008) might be as close as one can get to a workable definition.

Paraphrasability

The idea that poetry is unparaphrasable arises directly from the thought that the language of a poem assumes special importance. To try to capture in different words what the poem is saying might seem to involve abandoning precisely what gives the poem its interest and its very identity. However, the debate about poetry and paraphrase is rife with confusion. Is the supposed resistance of poetry to paraphrase an empirical claim, subject to test and verification? Or is it more like a necessary truth? Or even a prescription of some kind? Is it a matter of degree, with some poems easier than others to paraphrase, or does it apply evenly to all poems? Is it a consequence of a feature – such as metaphor or complexity of thought – that poetry shares with nonpoetic language or is it a peculiarity of poetry itself? What exactly are the criteria for a successful paraphrase?

There are those for whom the paraphrasability of poetry raises no problem in principle. Some poems, or parts of poems, on this view, might prove difficult in practice to paraphrase but that will be true of much nonpoetic usage as well. Most of the time poetry will yield to paraphrase that is more or less accurate and adequate for normal purposes. Such, for example, is the stance of Peter Kivy, who emphasizes, surely rightly, that the matter largely hinges on finding a suitable criterion for successful paraphrase (Kivy 1997). Kivy warns against setting the standard unreasonably high and acknowledges that if it is stipulated that paraphrase must involve the "reproduction of the poem's total effect on the reader" then of course it is impossible. But such a criterion, he thinks, is "nonsensical" because "it demands of paraphrase something that never was the object of the exercise in the first place" (Kivy 1997: 105).

But Kivy's position, however initially plausible, is not the last word. When the American critic Cleanth Brooks coined the phrase "the heresy of paraphrase" (Brooks 1968), it seems he had different concerns in mind from Kivy's. To say that paraphrasing poetry is a "heresy" is quite different from commenting on how easy or difficult it might be. In fact Brooks largely concedes the practical points, accepting that we can "describe adequately enough for many purposes what the poem in general is 'about' and what the general effect of the poem is"; he even allows that "[w]e can very properly use paraphrases as pointers and as short-hand references" as long as "we know what we are doing and that we see plainly that the paraphrase is not the real core of meaning which constitutes the essence of the poem" (Brooks 1968: 160). The "heresy" that Brooks evokes is that of thinking that each poem contains a statement of some sort, open to paraphrase, open even (in our own terms) to truth conditions, that can be extracted as its core meaning. Instead he promotes the idea of an "essential structure" of a poem, indissolubly linked to both form and content, a structure that yields "the complex of attitudes achieved" (Brooks 1968: 169). The question of whether such an "essential structure" exists, or whether it is a distinctive or interesting feature of poetry, is different from the question whether in practice we can capture more or less faithfully what a poem "says" using other words.

For philosophers of language it is puzzling, to say the least, that there should be usages of language that are resistant to paraphrase in principle, that there should in some cases (poems) be only *one* possible way that something could be expressed. If unparaphrasability were just a consequence of metaphor or complexity of thought

then this would not be a peculiarity of poetry per se and would not seem to be a matter of principle (some metaphors seem readily paraphrasable and complexity is always a matter of degree). Equally puzzling, and closely related to resistance to paraphrase, is the supposed resistance of a poem to any kind of alteration without damaging that "essential structure" that gives it its identity, whereby any change in the mode of expression (different words, different word order, even different line lengths) destroys something that is integral to the poem. Characteristically, when language is considered as a vehicle for thought, it is readily allowable that there could be different ways in which *the very same thought* might be expressed.

The philosopher of language Ernie Lepore has sought to defend the unparaphrasability of poetry by appeal to what he calls *hyperintensionality*, the presence of "linguistic environments in which replacing an expression with its synonym changes meaning" (Lepore 2009: 195). In natural language quotation is a clear example. Although *bachelor* is synonymous with *unmarried man*, substitution will not preserve meaning (or truth) in the move from

> "bachelor" is the first word in "bachelors are unmarried men" to "unmarried man" is the first word in "bachelors are unmarried men."
>
> (Ibid.)

Lepore's claim is that poems too create hyperintensional contexts: "poetry, like quotation, doesn't support substitution of synonyms because it harbours devices for being literally (partly) about their own articulations" (ibid.). Because a poem is "partly constituted by its own articulation … it is not re-articulable in another medium" (Lepore 2009: 193).

Lepore's suggestion is ingenious and reinforces the thought that there is more to the unparaphrasability of poetry than just the contingency of what can or cannot be done in practice. However, it might be questioned whether poems really are (even partly) about their own articulation. Also, although hyperintensionality might give an insight into the semantics of poetry, it offers little more to an explanation of the value of poetry than already noted in the fact that in reading poetry special attention is invited to the precise language used. So perhaps a better way of thinking of unparaphrasability is less as some brute fact about poetic usage, more as a convention in the practice of poetry itself: not something *discovered* by readers in reading poetry but something *demanded* of it within the practice (Lamarque 2009 – this view has been challenged as unduly essentialist in Kivy 2011).

Form–content unity

Related to unparaphrasability, and similarly thought to be a distinctive feature of poetry, is form–content unity, the idea that a poem's form is inextricably linked to, even identical with, its content. One of the first to make a sustained argument for form–content identity was the critic A. C. Bradley in his inaugural lecture at Oxford (1901), on "Poetry for Poetry's Sake," where he claimed "this identity of content and form … is no accident; it is of the essence of poetry in so far as it is poetry" (Bradley 1926: 15). Although form–content unity might be a reason for unparaphrasability

the two theses are not the same, because the latter could be true (as a contingency arising from complexity or technical usage) while the former false.

It is difficult to prove form–content unity as it is not obviously open to verification: how could one test whether form and content are united in a particular case? Inevitably the truth of the thesis hangs on exactly what it means. After all, it seems easy enough to speak of form and content separately: to characterize a poem's rhyme scheme, metrical pattern, stanza length or poem-type (sonnet, lyric, ballad, etc.) without mentioning what it is about, and to describe content – nightingales, dejection, unrequited love – without mentioning its formal qualities. There must be more to the thesis than that. For Bradley, it is primarily a claim about value. He seeks to counter what he sees as two naive views about the value of poetry: the view that reduces value to form, in effect to subtlety of expression or clever language use, and the view that reduces value to content, stressing that what matters *au fond* is the subject matter itself, not how it is expressed. Bradley rejects both views and sees poetic value as residing in the interlocking of form and content: the *how* and the *what* inextricably linked. He concedes that we can talk of form and content in abstraction from the work but only in terms that would apply equally to other poems: the rhyme scheme might be *abcb* or the meter dactylic hexameter, the subject might be King Arthur or love. All those could be instantiated elsewhere. But at the level of specificity that poetry demands, the relevant content is, in a reconstruction of Bradley's argument, something like *the-subject-as-realized-in-the-poem* while the form is *the-mode-of-realization-of-the-subject-in-the-poem*; it is at this level that form and content come together for, at this level of specificity, neither can be identified independently of the other and thus they are indivisible and mutually dependent (for a recent defense of Bradley, see Lamarque 2009).

The plausibility of this line of reasoning is likely to rest on what view is taken of that slippery term "content." What exactly is the *content* of a poem? It seems clear that specifications of content come in degrees of what might be called "fine-grainedness." To specify content in a coarse-grained manner is merely to give a general account of what a poem is about, perhaps its broad themes or its subject matter (say, a visit to Tintern Abbey). At this level poems can share the same content (just as could a poem and a paraphrase). But the more fine-grained the specification the less likely it is that content will be shared. The issue comes down to this: is it useful to identify a level of fine-grainedness such that only the poem itself counts as specifying its own content? It should not be just assumed that this is useful as merely stipulating this level of fine-grainedness does not make it illuminating. To defend form–content unity along these lines needs further theoretical support, perhaps again appealing to notions like hyperintensionality or the "practice" of poetry.

What are the specific values that poetry affords?

If unparaphrasability and form–content unity suggest what is distinctive about poetry, they do not yet serve to explain the value of poetry. Being resistant to paraphrase, exhibiting hyperintensionality or form–content identity, even employing repetition or patterning, seem not to be of intrinsic value, so if valuable at all it must be in virtue of some further ends achieved.

Experience and poetry

A simple and attractive thought about the value of poetry is that it resides somehow in the experiences that poetry yields. Can this be made more precise? Once again A. C. Bradley is a good starting point. He argued that the experience of reading poetry "is an end in itself, is worth having on its own account, has an intrinsic value … *poetic* value is this intrinsic worth alone" (Bradley 1926: 4). So poetic value for Bradley is the intrinsic value of the experience the poem affords. Malcolm Budd develops a similar thought: "what matters in poetry is the imaginative experience you undergo in reading the poem, not merely the thoughts expressed by the words of the poem" (Budd 1995: 83). Of course not just any experience elicited by a poem will contribute to its value (other than purely personal or subjective value). It must be suitably directed. As Budd puts it: "it is constitutive of this imaginative experience that it consists in an awareness of the words as arranged in the poem" (ibid.). That condition is not as anodyne as it might seem. For one thing it contrasts the experience of poetry with other more mundane forms of linguistic communication where no special attention is demanded of the verbal means used. But also for Budd the constraint connects to something very like form–content unity: "the function of a poem as poetry is that it itself should be experienced, which is to say that its function is to provide an experience that cannot be fully characterized independently of the poem itself" (Budd 1995: 84). If this is plausible, as it seems to be, then we have the makings of a justification for fine-grainedness in the specification of content.

Budd insists on the normativity of experience in the appreciation of all art, including poetry. The relevant experience involves "interacting with [the work] in whatever way it demands if it is to be understood" and must be "imbued with an awareness of (all) the aesthetically relevant properties of the work" (Budd 1995: 4). It might reasonably be objected that the experience of poetry, however well focused, is likely to differ significantly from person to person. Also poems are usually open to different kinds of construal and interpretation. But Budd is not dismissing personal responses, only seeking more intersubjective values. The experiences that concern him are *types* that can be "multiply instantiated" and "more or less closely approximated to" (ibid.); they are not token psychological states. Furthermore, if works legitimately afford different experiences, say, under different interpretations, then they are open accordingly to different evaluations.

Grounding the value of poetry in experience is useful for several reasons. It connects poetry naturally to other arts, in particular painting, music, dance or sculpture, where experience is paramount. Yet it also, in illuminating ways, pulls poetry apart from other kinds of language use. Usually the value of language resides in meaning and communication. The shift to experience in poetry once again highlights the medium as much as the "message," emphasizing the artistic over the merely functional. The experience that matters in poetry is the experience not of "form" alone or "content" alone but of the fusion of the two. This might also offer a different way of thinking about poetic interpretation; instead of merely linking interpretation to meaning it might be rewarding to link it as well to experience, broadly conceived. Interpreting a poem, including finding new ways of reflecting on its imagery or themes, could be viewed as a means of enriching the experience the poem can offer (Lamarque 2009).

Semantic density

Even if we grant Bradley's point that poetic value does not lie in form alone, there is no denying the pleasure to be had in the verbal dexterity found in many poems. Examples abound. Consider this typically intricate wordplay from Gerard Manley Hopkins:

> As a dare-gale skylark scanted in a dull cage
> Man's mounting spirit in his bone-house, mean house, dwells –
> That bird beyond the remembering his free fells;
> This in drudgery, day-labouring-out life's age.
>
> (First stanza of "The Caged Skylark," 1877)

Part of the pleasure here, as is common, is in the physical texture of the words, their sounds and rhythm. But physical texture is not enough. The words resonate with meaning, in particular with what has come to be known as "semantic density" (Monroe Beardsley wrote of "semantical thickness"), a notion which encompasses many of the favored conceptions of the New Critics such as irony, paradox, tension, ambiguity, implicit meaning, connotation. Beardsley saw the very essence of poetry in "secondary" or "implicit" meaning (Beardsley 1981: 127). It is a commonplace that poetry can offer complexity or depth of meaning and much of the pleasure in poetry is in exploring symbolic, metaphoric or thematic meaning through a work's imagery. Poetry characteristically invites not just a single reading but multiple rereading, where new aspects can be discovered or new internal connections made.

Philosophers with an interest in meaning would do well to reflect on the potential of poetry to exploit linguistic resources and on occasion to stretch language to its limits. It would be a mistake to suppose that all that poetry can offer in this respect could be captured in philosophers' theories of metaphor. On the other hand we should be wary of postulating some unique capacity of poetry – grounded in a special "poetic language" – to yield depths of meaning not available elsewhere. Semantic density, conceived as layers of implicit meaning, is not a property peculiar to poetry and arguably is present latently in all linguistic usage. It is just that normally little attention is given to the multiple potential meanings that could be "read into" what is said. It might be better to think of poetry as providing a *context* in which the potential of words to trigger associations and to interconnect in unusual ways is both exploited by poets and explored by readers.

"Poetic truth"

The thought that poetry should "instruct" as well as "please" was a classical and Renaissance commonplace associated with, among others, Horace and Sir Philip Sidney; it was reiterated by Dr Johnson in the eighteenth century. However, given the extraordinary diversity of poetry, it is hard to take literally the notion that *all* poems aspire to "instruct," far less impart truths. Of course there are didactic poems – like Lucretius's *De rerum natura* and Pope's *Essay on Man* – that explicitly expound philosophical visions. But there are also simple love lyrics or poems about the beauty of nature or devotional poems whose purpose is less instruction than

expression. They are pleasing not through what they teach but for the experiences they elicit. If one is seeking benefit, of a remotely "instructive" kind, from such poems then Shelley's account seems more apposite than Dr Johnson's: "Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight" (Shelley 2003: 682). Reading poetry might not add to the stock of truths in a reader but might well stretch the imagination in beneficial ways.

It is sometimes said of poetry that it can express profound truths about human nature, about human psychology or death or love or God in a manner not available to other kinds of writing, philosophy included. The claim, although superficially plausible, is difficult to evaluate because the ideas of profundity and "truth" in this context are ill-defined. Different kinds of examples come to mind. Difficult or intellectual poets, like W. B. Yeats or T. S. Eliot or Wallace Stevens, can seem profound because much effort is needed in getting to grips with their work. Yet profundity of another kind is evident where there is far less difficulty, as in the poems of, say, Thomas Hardy or Philip Larkin or even John Betjeman. The sense of profound truth in poetry often resides in the feeling that a sentiment or idea has been perfectly expressed, captured with a precision, clarity and integrity, that carries immense power and a kind of authority. It is not that some independent statement can be extracted from it to be verified against objective standards. Rather the profundity in question, as predicted by form–content unity, seems to lie in just *this* mode of expression. Interestingly where "falsehood" is ascribed to poetry it is often less to do with "correspondence with reality" than with faults like insincerity or sentimentality or cliché. In such cases, the ideas expressed lack "authority" because they seem poorly thought out, too "easy" or glib, second-hand or lacking precision. Poetry is profound through bringing to mind and crystallizing thoughts that are original, powerful and affecting. "Truth" in poetry, if conceived in this way, is not the propositional truth defined by philosophy, nor is it quite the same as "truth" sought in novels, where the latter is exhibited in a more extended manner through the actions and attitudes of the characters. Nevertheless it is a distinctive value of poetry. Perhaps, then, this is another topic where philosophers of literature need to give more focused attention to poetry among the literary arts.

See also Aristotle (Chapter 2), Definitions of art (Chapter 21), Value of art (Chapter 28), Metaphor (Chapter 34), Art and knowledge (Chapter 37), Literature (Chapter 50).

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Further reading

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Gibson, J. (ed.) (forthcoming) *The Philosophy of Poetry*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Commissioned essays, many by prominent philosophical aestheticians.)

52
THEATER

James R. Hamilton

Despite its ancient history as a set of practices, theatrical performance has been a relatively new subject for philosophical examination within the broadly analytic tradition. Not much work had been done concerning it before the middle of the 1990s. What had been done was fragmentary and dispersed (Saltz 1998: 375). But things have changed over the past decade or so, and it is useful to describe the philosophical landscape as it currently exists. Such a description will also allow us to sketch some new lines of investigation into promising and fertile questions.

Strategies for discussing what may be distinctive about theatrical practice have focused upon its peculiar use of texts, ways to describe what makes performers' contributions important, the distinctive qualities revealed in live performances, the nature and necessity of an audience or the effects that spatial arrangements can have on what can be grasped in theatrical performances. These have produced interesting and important reflection on aspects of theatrical performances.

Theoretical specifications of "theater"

A general question one might want to ask is what kind of thing is theater or a theatrical performance, after all? One strategy for answering the question might be to find a defensible definition of the practice or its products. That strategy stumbles over the fact that no definition of the practice seems possible. The technical problem is that for any apparently reasonable definition of "theater," just as of "performance," equally reasonable counterexamples are possible, indeed even likely (Carroll 1986: 64–66). A recent *Wikipedia* entry defines theater as "a collaborative form of fine art that uses live performers to present the experience of a real or imagined event before a live audience in a specific place." While this fairly representative sample of a definition will capture many instances well, it clearly excludes puppetry, which is a fairly standard form of theater in Europe and Asia. We might seek to emend this definition to get rid of the obvious counterexamples, and to specify that theater involves the use of live performers *or* things made to act like them. But this will exclude equally obvious cases of theater in which agents are neither clearly human nor made to act like them. Consider just two examples of Futurist theater, one in which the only thing seen is the scene and the only thing heard is a gunshot, and the other in which the only

things seen are abstract shapes that shimmer in resonance with specific sorts of sounds (Kirby and Kirby 1986: 247, 278).

Counterexamples to general definitions of "art" have come from historically marginal practices. For example, one thinks of the struggles about whether and how to expand the notion of "art" so as to include "ready-mades," "conceptual art" and "dada" (Dutton 2006). Counterexamples to definitions of "theater" have come both from the margins of the practice and from its very core. The reason for this may be that theater in any culture is such a diverse set of phenomena, arising in different ways, in different times and with different technical emphases – on imagination, imitation, play, song, dance or structuring of experience – wherever in the world it does arise (Zarrilli *et al*. 2006: 34).

Instead of seeking a definition, we may choose to discuss important resemblances and differences among theater and other forms. The most promising of these involves working out a theory of all the performing arts and situating theater among them. The first such effort was conducted by Paul Thom (1993). David Davies (2011) has recently tried this and offered something new by way of an answer to the question of what precisely makes theater different from, and how it is related to, the other arts, especially the other performing arts. Davies sets forth what he refers to as "the classical performing arts paradigm." This consists of distinguishing between *performed works* (where performances are of something else and are instances of that other thing) and *performance works* (where there is no other thing of which a performance is an instance). Performance works will be artistic, when they are, only in the sense that the performance itself is the focus of aesthetic and artistic appreciation. Performed works (whose instances Davies refers to as *work performances*) can be artistic in that same sense, but usually are artistic in the sense that the work instanced becomes the focus of aesthetic and artistic appreciation. Then, within the "classical paradigm," theatrical performances will usually, if not always, be classified as *work performances*, that is, as instances of performed works (Davies 2011: 138–43).

Davies's approach depends on the existence of relatively settled sets of practices that are, moreover, relevantly similar to each other in key respects. However, the history of theater suggests its practices do not match well with those of music and dance in a respect that is central to the conclusions Davies works out. Musicians are familiar with treating scores as more or less determinative of how the music should be played. Dancers are familiar with treating choreographic notations and descriptions, even if only tenuously remembered, as determinative of how a work should be danced. But this has almost never been the attitude actors and acting companies have taken to the scripts they have used in performances – even within the very successful tradition of literary theater common in late Western European culture. For example, in one of the most successful examples of that tradition, the performance of plays by Shakespeare, there has been very little agreement about some of the most basic elements of what will count as a performance of his scripts. Must Hamlet be played by a man? Sarah Bernhardt did not think so. Must a production of Hamlet have an Ophelia? Many productions have not. Must there be a scene in which Hamlet refuses to take his revenge and send Claudius, at prayer, unto heaven? Historically, many productions have dropped that scene altogether. Must the use of speech prefixes, used to indicate which character is speaking, be followed at all?

Quite a few theater pieces, especially in the theatrical avant-garde, have discarded these conventional directives. So, if our theory aims to capture actual artistic practices, we may well be driven away from Davies's "classical paradigm." For theatrical performances do not neatly fit the category of *work performances*, nor do they seem to square happily with that of *performance works*.

Histories instead

What we seem to be left with is history, or histories. Distinctions within the performing arts seem less driven by any definitional or ontologically primary conception of performing arts as they are by the complex and interwoven histories of performances and other social activities both within and across many different cultures (Zarrilli *et al*. 2006). The emphasis on historical differences among the performing arts has led some theater theorists to seek a story about the origins of the practice of theater.

This tendency has a long pedigree. As is well known, Aristotle asserted that Greek theater arose out of Greek religious festivals (Aristotle 1941: 1458–59). Whether he was right about the actual historical origins of theater, the distinction between theater and ritual is still important. What developed, if it did, out of Dionysian ritual was something else, something no longer a religious ritual. This may seem obvious; but not everyone sees the point (Schechner 1993; Turner 1982). Moreover, even if it is obvious, laying out the precise nature of the distinction poses a difficult challenge.

Another route, more recently being pursued, is akin to evolutionary anthropology or evolutionary psychology. Bruce McConachie (2011) has recently proposed that the cognitive capacities that have allowed theater to emerge in our species have first to do with play, then performance and then – by employing the capacity for "conceptual blending" – with ritual and, ultimately, theater. McConachie's analysis of the emergence of theater as a distinct set of practices is paralleled by interesting tales told about the evolutionary development of the practices of art more generally, and the capacities underlying those practices (Boyd 2009; Dutton 2009). On Dutton's view, for example, the capacity for making art and consuming it is related to shifts in human capacities that took place at some point 30,000 to 40,000 years ago. The "art instinct," as he calls it, is the result of sexual selection. Dutton's and McConachie's views are similar in that each relies on available empirical data and some speculative ("what if?") material as well. The speculative bits are also the worrisome bits, of course. Whether these are just more sophisticated "myths" of origins or are solid and testable theories is hard to tell at this point.

The text–performance relationship

Inspired by the success of the literary theater in the West, many theorists had been content to view performances as mere illustrations of texts. This resembles the view, already referenced above, that a theater script functions for a theatrical performance like a score functions for musical performance or a choreographic notation functions for a dance performance. This view was taken as settled truth in literary and theater

studies until the advent of performance studies in the 1980s. And the realization that its own history was at odds with its dominant theory was one of the central discoveries of that new branch of theoretical reflection on theater (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1976). So, as already discussed, most theater theorists and many in literary studies have abandoned this picture because it simply does not reflect the actual practices of theater even in the tradition most congenial to it.

One is now hard pressed to find an adherent of this option within either literary or theater studies. In its place, a number of alternatives have been discussed and some of them continue to draw adherents. A more relaxed view, hoping to square more neatly with actual practice, is the recipe or blueprint model (Carroll 1998). A variant of this view is the idea that texts function either like information to be delivered by different machinery, including theatrical performances, or like software that can be run on different platforms. None of these views holds up very well either theoretically or as traces of actual theater practices (Hamilton 2009a: 4–11; Worthen 2010: 6–20).

An option I have argued for is the "ingredients" model, in which texts function – when they are present at all and along with other things an acting group might lay to hand – as one among many other ingredients in the development of a performance (Hamilton 2007: 23–33). The motivation for this view is to encapsulate a wide range of theatrical practices as found in the European traditions (both mainstream and avant-garde) but also in other traditions where developed theater practices seem to have arisen independently: India, China, Africa.

A different approach is motivated by a desire to understand what happens to writing when texts are performed (Goldman 1975; Worthen 2010: 79–83). The crucial notion is that writing for the theater is writing that is designed to be used. And the uses to which writing is put in theater changes what it can mean. One mark of this is that, as Worthen frames it, knowing that a performance is faithful to a text tells us next to nothing about either of them (Worthen 2007: 80–81).

What these options have in common is that they are all aimed directly at enabling an analysis of what is to be appreciated in a theatrical performance and how it is to be appreciated. On the score model, for example, it is the work (embodied in a text) that is performed that is ultimately to be appreciated; and this will take place by way of getting at the work through the performance. On the recipe model, what is to be appreciated is the performance itself, conceived of as a product of acts of interpretation of the recipe or blueprint. How it is to be appreciated requires significant familiarity with the interpretive practices of the arts of acting, scene design, lighting and so on.

Narrative and nonnarrative theater

An issue central to understanding the aesthetic appreciation of theater has to do with the presence of both narrative and nonnarrative elements in performances. In one respect, this is an issue that the aesthetics of theater has in common with the aesthetics of literature; for both are concerned with the distinction itself and in the degree to which a work of literature or a performance can be said to be narrative (Carroll 2001; Velleman 2003; Lamarque 2004; Currie and Juriedini 2004). Moreover, many of the same aesthetic predicates are discussed: suspenseful, ironic, tragic. And many of the

same distinctions will apply, for example between character-driven and plot-driven narratives.

Nonnarrative literature is widely discussed, but typically not in those terms. Since lyric poetry is probably the standard example, it is easy to see why that might be so. Nonnarrative theatrical performance is often discussed in terms of being structured according to poetic forms (Hamilton 2007); so, for similar reasons, the terms of aesthetic analysis again line up with categories of literary analysis.

However, the question of whether the vehicle of narratives and nonnarratives can also bear some of those same predicates is not one that has received very much attention. It appears that both narrative and nonnarrative theatrical performances can be suspenseful, but perhaps nonnarrative performances cannot be ironic. Indeed, it is not even clear that narrative theatrical performances can be other than situationally ironic, although of course it presents narratives that can be. This is a feature of theatrical performance that awaits analysis.

Acting

Theories of acting, ever since Stanislavsky, have typically been grounded in then-current findings in the sciences. Famously, Stanislavsky's was based in the stimulus–response theories of Ribot (Carnicke 2000). The rise of performance theory in the 1980s saw a group of theorists looking to anthropology and ethology for their primary resources.

We can distinguish between two broad strategies for understanding acting. Some think the right source of explanation is to be found in psychology. Those who assume this (e.g. Searle 1975; Doggett and Egan 2007) are interested in employing something like standard cognitive science to investigate the capacities that enable us to engage in certain kinds of activities, including artistic activities. Typically, these views have also assumed that the target to be explained in the case of theater is confined to the behavior of those who portray characters in narrative performances. A difficulty with this approach is the fact that the portrayal of characters in narrative performances, even in standard theater, involves many long stretches of nonnarrative moments. If one focuses on the capacities that enable one kind of behavior but the actual practice might involve several kinds of behavior, it is unlikely that one has given an account of "the behavior." A second variant within this strategy belongs to those who argue explicitly for the uniqueness of acting among and in contrast to other performance practices. One such view (Woodruff 2008) offers a conception of what performers do – "action worth watching" – and, on the basis of an analysis of what action worth watching consists in, arrives at a solution that singles out practices that are recognizably those of the portrayal of characters.

On the other hand, we find theories of acting that are taken to apply beyond the portrayal of characters in narrative performances and to include forms of theatrical performance in other, largely nonnarrative, performances. These theories have tended to look not only to cognitive psychology but also to cognitive anthropology and to ethology for resources. One of these – emerging from theater studies and employing concepts and theses derived from "wide" theories of the mental and "embodied cognitive science" – is poised to garner significant attention from philosophers in the

near future (McConachie and Hart 2006). Another theory – the "display" theory of acting – is grounded in developments arising out of the early performance studies programs, but employs a more sophisticated and critical understanding of its socio-biological basis, as well as tools adapted from advanced theories in philosophy of language and evolutionary signaling theory (Hamilton 2009b).

Intentions and expectations

Performers have intentions with respect to what spectators are to be aware of in their performance, and perhaps with respect to how spectators are to react to it. Spectators in turn have expectations of performers that can impose restrictions on what performers can intend. Some of these intentions and expectations are fully conscious in the moment of performance and can have immediate effects on the event itself. Perhaps this accounts for our sense of the liveness in theatrical performance. But other intentions and expectations are shaped before, and independently of, the moment of performance.

Of these latter, some are consciously chosen and others are accepted as part of the given cultural environment. Typically, an actor's decision as to how to deliver a line is a conscious choice. Equally typically, the choice to deliver most of her lines standing, walking or sitting in front of the spectators, and spectators' expectations that this is how it shall be done, are more nearly shaped by the shared cultural environment than by any intention on the part of either performer or spectator. This is immediately evident if we imagine what would have to change for it to be common and commonly expected practice for actors to deliver their lines while walking upside down on their hands, out among the spectators.

One issue that needs analysis is how these intentions and expectations, occurrent and dispositional, play a role in enabling the performers to activate desired spectator responses and contribute to spectator uptake of the material content being presented to them. Another important feature is that most of what we recognize as what counts as style, movement and tradition in theater arises out of these intentions and expectations. But exactly how styles, movements and traditions are embedded in, and effectively expressed by, the intentions and expectations of performers and audiences has only begun to be analyzed (Hamilton 2007).

Another issue has to do with the fact that spectators often make attributions to whole companies of performers, without knowing or caring very much about who actually is responsible for the choices that have gone into a production. In fact, anyone familiar with theatrical production also realizes that many times even those who participated in building a performance have no clear recollection, by the time the performance is shown in public, of who made which decisions. Does this suggest we need to take more seriously those challenges to methodological individualism that have been pushed by proponents of some conceptions of group or collective intention and action? If not, what account of collective intentions and actions will be adequate for a representation of these phenomena? The importance of this has to do with whether, on any occasion, spectators may be said to make either correct or incorrect attributions of responsibility for failure or success in a performance.

The importance of the performer

In weighing competing theories of acting, aestheticians will find it worth considering whether we should adopt a constraint on any adequate story, specifically that it be shaped in terms of what spectators can apprehend within the watching of a given performance. One reason in favor of such a constraint is that it is hard to see otherwise how whatever story we tell about the nature of acting could have any aesthetic significance, on any account of what aesthetic significance consists in.

Making the consideration of effects on spectators prominent is one way to frame a discussion that already exists, namely, the discussion of the importance of performers. At this point, the literature recognizes two main points of view. The performer's presence – the peculiar energy that seems to be animating many spectator responses to performers – is a common if worrisome feature of theatrical performances. So it is that, on the first of the competing views, performers are thought to be important because they are the sources of power in theatrical performances (Goldman 1975; Chaikin 1993; Zamir 2010). The same or a similar phenomenon – the bodies of performers – can have a startling effect on how words sound and how they come to be effective/ineffective in the conveyance of thought (whether in words or in images). So, on the second view, performers are taken to be important because they are sometimes the source of the contents of performances (Worthen 2010: 11–12; Davies 2011: 149–64). Much that is illuminating can, and has been, said regarding these explanations of the importance of performers.

A third view is certainly possible, namely that performers are important simply because they are the sources of whatever information is transferred in a performance to any spectator. This is not the view, canvassed briefly earlier, that texts consist of information to be transferred by performers. It is the view that the relevant information in a performance is embodied in the performers themselves and it is that which is transmitted to spectators. This view appears to be more general (more inclusive) than either of the first two; and it may be less mystifying than the first, and beg fewer ontological questions than the second. But it remains to be developed.

Liveness of performance

Does any of the foregoing mean that theatrical performances contain aesthetic properties that other media do not have, simply in virtue of the very liveness of theater? Some have thought so (Carroll 2006: 112–19), because the perceptual possibilities of live theater are at or very near the ontological bedrock of what theater puts on offer. Others have thought not (Auslander 1999), because, in a highly mediatized culture, "liveness" is no longer as distinguishable a feature in any performance as it might appear to have been in an earlier age. As a result, it simply cannot be the bearer of any significant aesthetic force. This debate is ongoing (Nellhous 2010: 184–89; McConachie 2010).

Still others have thought that liveness is important as a distinguishing feature of theater (as opposed to movies, for example), but that it has very little to do directly with the aesthetics of theater and more to do with the text–performance relation

characteristic of theater (Osipovich 2006) or with the conditions that partially enable/disable spectators in recognizing what is being presented to them (Hamilton 2007) prior to any aesthetic assessment of what is recognized.

The alleged necessity and the nature of audiences

An obvious feature of theater, when considered as a social activity, is that it has similarities to and differences from other public activities. Those other activities also involve a division between some people who are the central participants and others who are not the central participants. Spectator sports, certain kinds of company picnics, as well as some religious and political rituals bear important similarities to theatrical events.

Theater inherently involves public gatherings. It takes place in public spaces, spaces that are socially and often legally set aside for its performances. The word "audience," as it is used in the familiar formulation "audience for art," does not necessarily mean actual gatherings of people. But as the word "audience" is used with respect to theater it does. Theater is a social activity.

The thesis that theater inherently involves gatherings of people is compatible with the claim that a theatrical performance may take place with only a few audience members, only one or even none at all. For that thesis has to do with the nature of a contrast between the practice of theater and the activities involved in the practices of the other performing arts.

This point can be understood most clearly by observing a distinction between what we may call "audience practices" and "nonaudience practices." An "audience practice" is the conduct of some activity requiring some level of skill for its execution, with a view to presenting the activity, some of its features or its products to an audience. A "nonaudience practice" is the conduct of some activity requiring some level of skill for its execution with a view to realizing the activity, some of its features or its products by the persons engaged in the activity.

Of course, a nonaudience practice of playing music might be observed. A group of musicians playing by themselves might be overheard by passersby. And that music may be listened to by those passersby with just the same kind of attention and pleasure as they would have had were they to have gone to a concert hall to hear this music performed (Walton 1979). This does not, by itself, transform our musicians' nonaudience practice into an audience practice of playing music. Similarly, if a group of musicians, playing onstage in front of an audience in the concert hall where they have been hired to play, nevertheless feel they are playing among themselves, this does not transform their activity into a nonaudience practice of playing music.

The point is that, whereas playing music and dancing are activities that commonly can have both audience and nonaudience forms of practice, there seems to be no activity of theatrical playing that has a common nonaudience practice form. The thesis that theater inherently involves gatherings of people just comes to the claim there are no common nonaudience practices that are recognizably the making of theater.

One might, of course, think that games of make-believe should be counted as the common nonaudience practice of theater. A proponent of this view would be right

to point out that make-believe or the propensity to engage in make-believe is among the raw ingredients in human nature utilized in theatrical craft. But, whereas we do not hesitate to think of people at a party, for example, as dancing or singing, when children engage in games of make-believe we do not think they are making theater, but only by or for themselves.

These observations seem to give us a necessary condition for something being the practice of theater or the product of the practice, namely, it must be dispositioned to have an audience. Considerably more would be wanted to distinguish theater from other forms of social conduct, including other forms of performance. One way we might attempt this is to acknowledge that, while many sports and religious activities also aim at doing something in front of others, only the performing arts are "done for" their audiences (Thom 1993).

A difficulty however concerns whether we can specify a sense of "doing something for" that turns some part of the public gathering into exactly an audience, as opposed to turning them into some other kind of separable group kind. For example, "doing something for" others fits elements of religious rites pretty well. But those who believe the rites are efficacious are unlikely to agree that what is going on is just a performance nor, more generally, that they are correctly characterized as the "audience" to the rite. To think otherwise seems to be to mistake what is meant when a religious rite is said to be "done for" its participants. It seems more appropriate to think they are the recipients or beneficiaries of the rite rather than its audience. In another and perhaps related sense of "doing something for," the annual company picnic is clearly set forth by some in the public gathering for others in the same gathering. But this way of doing something for another, even as it has its home in reference to a public gathering, does not bring out anything like the information about theater we seek to uncover. So, the problem is that it is not clear that there exists a specific sense of some people "doing something for" other members of a gathering that generates precisely an audience.

The spaces of performances

Variations as to how audiences and performers are present to each other is a matter to which attention must be paid if we wish to target the range of aesthetically relevant factors at play in a performance. The relationships between any given variation and the content of a performance is a matter that may be distinctive of theater but that is certainly a matter for aesthetic analysis of theatrical performances. Several more or less standard variations of spatial arrangements exist, each of which has associations with different kinds of access to the content of a performance (Hilton 1987; Carlson 1996).

A simple pair of examples will help us here. In an arena arrangement, there usually will be no large vertical objects. This is because that would prevent some members of the audience from seeing some of the stage action at least some of the time. Without such objects in the set, many effects creating a sense of grandeur will be impossible. The presence of such objects in an arena setting is either a sign of carelessness or misguided carefulness on the part of a designer, or it is a sign that the

performance is not designed to be seen by everyone all of the time. On the other hand, arena arrangements are usually much more intimate than are most proscenium arrangements. In these ways, and in many others, arrangements in theater have effects on reception – as to both mode and content – that may not have explicit analogues in dance and musical performances, even when the cues for reception are similar (that is, movements and sounds).

See also Aristotle (Chapter 2), Nietzsche (Chapter 8), Tragedy (Chapter 40), Humor (Chapter 41), Literature (Chapter 50), Music (Chapter 61), Dance (Chapter 62).

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53
FILM

Murray Smith

Film and the established arts

Arguments against film as an art

Where the relations among film and art have been discussed, the outcome has often been a disdain for the artistic dimensions, achievements or potential of film. A usefully extreme version of such disdain can be found in the work of the conservative philosopher Roger Scruton who, in his discussions of photography and film, excludes the mass of popular fiction filmmaking from the possibility of aesthetic achievement or distinction, dismissing it as the "mass marketing of sentimentality under the guise of imaginative drama" (Scruton 1981: 86).

Scruton writes of the "fictional incompetence" of cinema (Scruton 1983: 112), suggesting that the fictional dimension of a film is held in check by the fact that the fiction depends on the recording, visually and aurally, of an actual space and time. The fiction of Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara embracing in an antebellum mansion in Georgia depends on a depiction of Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh embracing under arc lights in a studio in California. Now, the importance of this is that it reveals a particular type of aesthetic criterion: a fiction, as a type of aesthetic object, must not be bound to a mere *recording* of (some part of) reality. The aesthetic object is such by virtue of a creative or imaginative transformation of what it represents, and film, due to its character as a recording device (a "phonograph for the eyes," as Thomas Edison conceived of it), is "incompetent" in performing this function: films can perform an aesthetic function, but only so far and never very well.

Scruton is not a major theorist or critic of film, and his arguments are not extensively developed, but they serve to introduce two traditions of thought about the aesthetic potential of film which are of greater significance. First, Scruton's attitudes to film, and popular film in particular, were in many ways prefigured by the Marxist philosopher and aesthetician Theodor Adorno. For Adorno, the aesthetic potential of film was corrupted by the mechanical and commercial nature of filmmaking, this commercial function conflicting with the "autonomous" development necessary for art, debasing the Kantian "purposelessness" of art into the barren "purpose" of commerce (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979: 158). Adorno's hostility to film and its aesthetic potential was, however, far from the dominant attitude among early and classical film theorists. It is among such figures that we find the second overlap with Scruton,

though their arguments move in the opposite direction to those of Scruton. Theorists such as Rudolf Arnheim, Béla Balázs and Sergei Eisenstein also examined film in the light of traditional aesthetic criteria, in order to demonstrate that film *was* capable of aesthetic achievement, rather than to expose its (supposed) failings in this regard. Writing in 1922, Eisenstein and fellow Soviet filmmaker Sergei Yutkevich proclaimed that "the genius of Charlie Chaplin" had taken "the eighth seat in the Council of Muses" (Eisenstein 1988: 29).

Arguments for film as an art

Along with those of Lev Kuleshov, V. I. Pudovkin and Dziga Vertov, Eisenstein's theoretical writings grew out of, and developed in relation to, filmmaking practice – both his own and the practice of other directors and other traditions of filmmaking. Eisenstein's use of, and perspective on, the concept of art was inflected by the revolutionary social and political context in which he worked, drawing it away from considerations of "beauty" or "disinterest," and towards its role in galvanizing an audience in relation to the practical matters of revolution and social change: Eisenstein wrote of "an ever deeper immersion in the dialectical principles of militant materialism in the field of art" rather than a concern with "aesthetics" (Eisenstein 1988: 244; see also 161–62). Abstract as this declaration sounds, his theoretical work is in fact littered with concrete examples, focusing on the construction of films at every level: the composition of the shot, the editing of the sequence, the overall force of a film. This is a vestige, perhaps, of his early training as an engineer, and very much part of a general (anti-Kantian) emphasis on the utility of art, on didacticism and tendentiousness, and the prioritizing in the early Soviet Union of the arts of design, architecture, documentary ("factography") and propaganda. The central organizing concept for Eisenstein was, of course, the notion of *montage*. Although conceived initially in terms of the editing of shots, the concept came to refer more broadly to the creation of new, higher levels of meaning and experience through the juxtaposition of any more basic elements. Eisenstein discriminated different types of montage and elaborated the notion in numerous directions (see, for example, Eisenstein 1988: 161–94).

Eisenstein's theoretical work represented the reflections of a filmmaker on his own and others' filmmaking, and neither aspired to nor achieved a completeness or systematicity. A very different and more academic approach was undertaken by Arnheim, who produced the most systematic prewar treatise on film as a traditional art, *Film als Kunst* (1932) (translated into English in 1933 as *Film*, shortened and revised in 1957 as *Film as Art*). Arnheim's education was in Gestalt psychology, philosophy and art history, and his work is infused with Kantian assumptions and precepts (though he seldom makes explicit reference to philosophical aesthetics). The key assumption derived from this tradition was the definition of art as embodying "purposiveness without purpose": the notion that aesthetic objects (whether natural or human-made) are distinctive because of the manner in which they are cut loose from practical ends. (The color red in a stop sign is telling you to do something in the world; red as it is used in a Rothko painting, or a film by Hitchcock, is simply inviting your attention.) This disengagement from practical purposes enables aesthetic objects to be used for purely *perceptual* or *contemplative* purposes: roughly speaking,

the aesthetic object becomes an occasion for reflection rather than action. In order to fulfill this aesthetic role, however, an artwork must exhibit certain properties: it must possess qualities of "form" which distinguish it from that which it represents, its "mere subject matter" (Arnheim 1983: 55). In other words, to be worthy of this disengaged, aesthetic attention, a work of art has to be more than a mere imitation of the world, or some part of it: it must also be a transformation of the world. Arnheim's Kantianism is tempered, however, by a suspicion of pure formalism as an artistic practice, and a recognition that "informative" modes of filmmaking – like the documentary – are as legitimate an arena of artistic expression as the fiction film. Arnheim cites Goethe's dictum "art is instructive long before it is beautiful" in order to stress the potential significance of propositional content, and as a corrective to pure formalism as a critical practice (Arnheim 1997: 76; see also Arnheim 1983: 114–29).

The idea that films might creatively shape that which they represent could hardly be taken for granted during the first decades of cinema's existence; indeed, as we have seen, arguments are still occasionally put forward denying film's status as an art in this sense. Photography and film were regarded by many as nothing more than advanced technologies of recording, and thus unable to effect that transformation of "material" vital to art. As such, Arnheim's principal goal was to demonstrate the manifold ways in which film in fact *did* transform what it represented – in spite of its apparent ability to attain "absolute truth to the way things appear" – and the ways in which this fact of transformation could be enhanced and accentuated by creative control of the medium. Film – silent, black-and-white film of the type that formed Arnheim's corpus – reduces a three-dimensional world to two dimensions, so a filmmaker has the creative choice either of fostering the appearance of three dimensions, or of stressing abstract, two-dimensional forms. Similarly, film takes a world of color and renders it in shades of gray; it takes an unlimited and continuous visual field and frames it; it takes a world of sound and renders it, if at all, by visual means. Thus Arnheim praises Josef von Steinberg's *The Docks of New York* (1928) for the way in which it evokes the sound and impact of a gunshot through a shot of a flock of birds suddenly taking flight, expressively shaping – and not merely recording – the event depicted. Encapsulating his overall argument, Arnheim writes: "Art begins where mechanical reproduction leaves off, where the conditions of representation serve in some way to mould the object" (Arnheim 1983: 55). Obvious as this view might seem to those trained in aesthetics, it conflicts with an assumption in popular film history which was particularly active in the late 1920s when Arnheim wrote: the idea that *technological* advances in the "mechanical reproduction" of reality correlate with *artistic* advances. Arnheim vigorously protested against the synchronized sound film, and did so, it is worth noting, by modeling his argument on a classic text of philosophical aesthetics, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoön* (1962).

Film and the transformation of traditional artistic criteria

All classical theorists reveal an interest in defining the specificity of film, but where those discussed so far attempted to demonstrate how such medium-specific features enabled film to function aesthetically according to traditional criteria, other theorists argued that its value lay in its transformation of these very criteria. Two of the most

notable figures in this regard are the German cultural theorist Walter Benjamin (1973), and the French film critic André Bazin. Both recognize, as Scruton does, that film does not operate like any traditional art, indeed that its specificity might be said to lie in this fact; but unlike Scruton, both Benjamin and Bazin, each in their own way, celebrate the transformation of familiar aesthetic experience effected by film.

Bazin's (1967) thinking about film represented a significant departure from that of the silent "creationists" (Carroll 1988b: 90) – those theorists, like Arnheim, who formulated their theories in relation to "silent" cinema and who stressed the importance of creative transformation – and insofar as synchronous sound enhanced the recording capacity of film, Bazin is philosophically as well as historically the first great theorist of the sound era. For Bazin's account of film begins with the intuition that we have already noted in relation to other theorists: that photography and film are uniquely powerful mechanisms in the recording of reality, and the manner in which they represent the real world is qualitatively different from all traditional media. Bazin stressed the ability of film to represent the continuity of the world, temporally and spatially: the cinematic frame implying a continuous field of space merely "masked" by the frame, a continuous shot capturing a slice of reality in real time (an example of what Gregory Currie has termed *automorphic* representation, in which the time of representation and represented are identical; Currie 1995: 97). Briefly sketched, Bazin's theory might sound rather like a version of the resemblance theory of depiction, where film occupies the role of the most compelling and pure case: films possess a special realism because of their "absolute *lifelikeness*," that is, their utmost resemblance "to the way things appear" (see Carroll 1988b: 122–25).

There is more to Bazin's theory than a notion of extreme resemblance, however. Bazin conceived of photographic representation as a kind of "imprint" or "trace" left by the world on the film, comparable to the way in which a shroud takes on the imprint of the body within it (Bazin 1967: 9–16). The key feature of filmic representation is the direct causal link between representation and reality, not the high degree to which representation is said to resemble reality; in the terminology of Charles Peirce, Bazin focuses upon the *indexical* rather than *iconic* dimension of photographic representation. Indeed, writing of the idea of the replication of phenomenal reality by film through resemblance, Bazin scorned the "myth of total cinema," arguing that no matter how sensuously refined the filmic image became, it would never be indistinguishable from reality. And more starkly, Bazin also celebrated a moment in Marcel Ichac's documentary *Annapurna*, when an avalanche sweeps away the camera and denies us footage of the climactic ascent of the mountain, a moment which captures a real event, not through any kind of "positive" resemblance, but rather through its obverse, the loss of any representation at all (ibid.: 161–62; see also 14).

How, then, does this feed into an evaluation of the aesthetic capacity of film outside of traditional conceptions of the aesthetic? Where Arnheim and Eisenstein stress the need for film to *transcend* its status as a mechanical recording device in order to underline its "formative" aesthetic qualities, Bazin celebrates precisely its uniquely direct relationship with that which it represents. Thus, Bazin values the continuous long take and mobile camera work over the principle and the techniques of montage, so central for Eisenstein. And if, for Scruton, "fictional truth" is

corrupted by what he sees as the literal realism of film, for Bazin the unique "ontology" of cinema rather enriches filmic fiction (Bazin 1967: 15; Smith 1995b: 116).

Contemporary developments

The rise of semiotics – the study of signs, usually modeled on and assuming natural language as the preeminent sign system – in the 1950s and 1960s led to the temporary eclipse of the study of film *as an art*, as a focal topic in film theory. Questions concerning art and the aesthetic were dissolved into the broader notions of symbolism, language, representation, mind and culture; in some quarters, the aesthetic is not merely ignored or marginalized, but explicitly attacked as an outmoded and bankrupt notion (Bennett 1987; Taylor 1998). Since the 1980s, however, debates centered on film art and aesthetics have reignited. The sources of the rebirth are twofold. First, there are those film critics and theorists who focus on the aesthetic dimensions of film, and do so in part by drawing on presemiotic traditions. Two such traditions have been particularly influential: that of Bazin and that of the Russian formalists, a circle of literary theorists who also contributed to the creationist strand of film theory in the 1920s and 1930s (Eagle 1981). The influence of Bazin is evident in the work by, and inspired by, Dudley Andrew (1984), Stanley Cavell (1979), and V. F. Perkins (1972), all of whom stress the importance of critical attention to particular films in the formulation of broader theories of film. The Russian formalists are a principal source for the "historical poetics" – so called because of its focus on artistic norms and practices in historical contexts – of David Bordwell (1985, 1988, 1989, 1997), Kristin Thompson (1988) and those they in turn have influenced, such as Edward Branigan (1992), Carl Plantinga (1997) and Murray Smith (1995a).

The second source of the rebirth of debate on film art arises from philosophy. Film has become an object of debate among contemporary analytic philosophers to the extent that the philosophy of film has now been recognized as a distinct domain of philosophical inquiry, which approaches the questions of film theory with the "methods" of analytic philosophy (Allen and Smith 1997; cf. Carroll 1988a: 263). Key figures here include Currie, who has analyzed some of the theses of classical film theory, especially those associated with Bazin, in the context of the philosophy of mind (Currie 1995). George Wilson (1986, 2011) has more explicitly pursued the Bazinian legacy, as well as offering arguments on the nature of film narration which overlap with those of Bordwell, Branigan and Smith. The crucial linking figure here is Noël Carroll, who has written on a wide array of topics, and occupies an important role in debates in both philosophical aesthetics and film theory. Moreover, three anthologies have appeared in which representatives of both the philosophy of film and film theory are gathered together (Bordwell and Carroll 1996; Allen and Smith 1997; Livingston and Plantinga 2009). These anthologies, and the work of all the figures mentioned here, testify to the way in which the philosophy of film maintains the broad focus, indeed the grand ambition, of semiotic film theory while nevertheless arguing for the need to specify particular subdomains of inquiry – like those of art and the aesthetic – with their own particular problems and questions (see Bordwell on "middle-level research," 1996: 26–30; and Carroll on "piecemeal theorizing," 1988a, 1996).

Historical poetics and neoformalism

Bordwell's entire *oeuvre* has stressed what would traditionally be thought of as an aesthetic perspective on film; indeed, his collaborator Kristin Thompson has overtly contrasted their work with that of contemporary semiotic film theorists in terms of its "assumption of an aesthetic realm distinct from (though dependent upon) a non-aesthetic realm" (Thompson 1988: 9). More specifically, Bordwell's keen attention to style and technique mark his commitment to the analysis of film as an art. This concentration on style echoes the work of classical theorists like Eisenstein (on whom Bordwell has written) and Arnheim, as does his use of scientific psychology (cognitive psychology taking the place of Gestalt psychology in Arnheim, and Soviet biomechanics and reflexology in Eisenstein). Moreover, Bordwell has argued for the existence of "style-centered" films, which appeal to us more through their abstract dimensions, of rhythm and graphic play, than through their depiction of particular subject matter; and he has stressed that these formal dimensions play a significant role even in our appreciation of the most "content-laden" of films (Bordwell 1985: 274–310). This idea receives its most forthright expression in his arguments against critical approaches favoring interpretation, or hermeneutics: approaches – overwhelmingly dominant in semiotic theory – which deem the sole or main role of criticism to be the revelation of the meaning or "thesis" of a film (Bordwell 1989: 249–74). Bordwell insists on the distinctness (and even primacy) of the perceptual and cognitive *experience* of artworks, as opposed to any meaning or moral we may take from them.

All of this is supported by one of the cornerstones of Bordwell's approach: the notion of *defamiliarization*. Derived from the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky, defamiliarization refers to the perceptual and cognitive "making strange" of our everyday perceptions and conceptions (Shklovsky 1990). This experience of "estrangement" or "seeing anew" is regarded as more significant than any thesis or "message" about the subject matter which might be implied. Such a position can be regarded as a contemporary version of one of the founding statements of modern aesthetics, Alexander Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (1961), in which Baumgarten argued for the integrity of perception as an end in itself, and not merely as a means to (conceptual, cognitive) knowledge.

Bordwell's work has developed in tandem with that of Noël Carroll, though the latter's work has always had a more overtly philosophical character (indeed, while Carroll began his career in film studies he has become a professional philosopher). Carroll's interest in aesthetic questions is evident throughout his work, but particularly in his earliest essays and first book, which discussed classical theorists like Arnheim and Bazin, and later writers like Perkins whose work has been defined in part by an engagement with classical film theory and the issues it focused upon (Carroll 1988b). Carroll's view of classical theory is divided. On the one hand, Carroll has contested the viability and value of essentialist, medium-specificity arguments. On the other hand, he has noted the great value of the "close examination of characteristic cinematic structures" (Carroll 1988a: 91) – that is, practices which have in fact been widely or successfully used by filmmakers, regardless of whether they are in any sense "specific" to the medium – arising in the course of the medium-specific arguments of classical film theory (such as Arnheim's on camera positioning or Bazin's on the exploitation of depth of field and deep staging).

Moreover, Carroll has conducted an investigation into, and defense of, the artistic potential of popular art in general, with commercial film – "the movies" – as a major example. Carroll accounts for "the power of movies" by analyzing the way in which standard filmic conventions (concerning framing, point-of-view and so forth) are designed to exploit our perceptual and cognitive endowments in a direct, untutored and thus cross-cultural fashion (like Bordwell, Carroll draws extensively on contemporary cognitive and evolutionary theory; see, for example, Carroll 2007). *A Philosophy of Mass Art* (Carroll 1998) tackles the many arguments and prejudices to be found within traditions of aesthetic theory against the very idea of popular *art*, while Carroll's *The Philosophy of Horror* (1990) makes the case for a particular genre of popular art through the patient examination – conceptual and empirical – of a vast array of examples and problems (including the definition of horror, the notion of character identification, and various paradoxes of fiction and of horror).

The philosophy of film

At the same time that the philosophy of film has emerged as a distinct area of aesthetics, so has the traffic between the theory and philosophy of film and other areas of aesthetics become busier. There are now well-developed debates on film and intention, authorship and interpretation; fiction and nonfiction; cognitive, aesthetic and moral value; and depiction, all of which feed into and off of debates around these issues in philosophy of art more generally. Livingston and Plantinga (2009) provide a compendious overview of debates in contemporary philosophy of film.

One distinctive way in which the value of film art has been approached is through the *film-as-philosophy* (FAP) thesis – the claim that film as a medium, or individual films, may not only prompt philosophical questions (about the nature of authorship and depiction, for example) but act as a vehicle for philosophical reflection. Considered in the context of wider debates about the value(s) of art, the FAP thesis is a way of making a very strong claim about the potential cognitive value of (film) art – insofar as philosophical knowledge is generally held to meet higher standards of rational soundness, empirical warrant and reflective certainty than everyday knowledge.

Proponents of FAP, beginning with Cavell, have often identified types and individual examples of mainstream narrative filmmaking as instances of the filmic articulation of philosophical knowledge, though subsequent debate has brought a wider range of filmmaking into play, including examples from art cinema and the avant-garde (Smith and Wartenberg 2006). Different aspects and mechanisms of these films have been identified as the key devices through which philosophical work might be conducted: Wartenberg (2007), for example, stresses the ways in which films may function as counterexamples and thought experiments; Flory (2008) focuses on the effects of character and narrative structure. David Davies (2009), by contrast, argues that – at least in the case of the elusive and ambiguous style of a filmmaker such as Terrence Malick – it is the visual and aural style of the film which impresses upon us a particular, philosophically informed stance towards the world. In the case of Malick, that stance is one – closely associated with the philosophies of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger – in which our knowledge and experience of the world are understood as fundamentally *embodied*. Skeptics about the FAP thesis have queried whether films

can really be held to meet the exacting normative standards required by philosophical knowledge claims, suggesting that – as with other art forms – only more modest cognitive claims can be made on behalf of most films and types of filmmaking (Livingston 2009). Moreover, by upping the ante with regard to the cognitive value of films, we undermine our ability to recognize and appreciate properly the other values embodied by works of art, especially their aesthetic qualities. The danger is that complex artworks intended to prompt multifaceted perceptual, cognitive and emotional experiences are misconstrued as narrowly philosophical treatises (Smith 2006a).

If the FAP thesis is to be understood primarily in relation to debates around the value of art, in the work of Paisley Livingston (1997, 2007, 2009) it also intersects with the debate concerning authorship in the cinema. One thread of this debate concerns what defines authorship, and what typical and possible forms authorship takes in the case of film. For Livingston, an author is an agent responsible for artistic design intended to afford artistic experience, including the conveying of expressive content (which in turn might include the expression of philosophical ideas). The expressive and design material must originate in some sense with the authorial agent, and they must have "sufficient control" over its development and articulation in the finished work such that it is most aptly attributed to them. Based on this characterization, Livingston makes a sharp distinction between an author and an "artistic contributor." In Ingmar Bergman's *Summer with Monika* (1953), Harriet Andersson delivers a bravura performance that is undeniably central to the power of the film. But given that Andersson's performance was directed by Bergman on the basis of a character developed in his script for the film, and that the details of her performance are throughout shaped by Bergman's oversight of the other aspects of film style (editing, lighting, music and so on), she is more aptly characterized as an artistic contributor than as a coauthor. Bergman is thus plausibly thought of as the sole author of the film, notwithstanding the collaborative labor necessary for the production of such a film (and indeed almost any type of film other than certain varieties of short, avant-garde works).

Berys Gaut (2010) develops a strikingly different account of film authorship, in which single authorship is all but ruled out. For Gaut, mainstream films – films reliant on some sort of division of labor at the creative level – are intrinsically multiply authored. To contribute to the artistic features of a work is to be one of the authors of that work; no director, not even Bergman, can exert such a level of control that no sort of authorial contribution to the work is made by a film's performers and other creative personnel. Another significant point of contrast between the models of authorship advanced by Livingston and Gaut concerns the nature of cooperation in multiply authored works. For Livingston, multiple authorship is primarily a matter of coordination between authorial agents, and to the degree that such coordination is absent, so is authorship itself. For Gaut, by contrast, conflict – lack of coordination among a work's authors – can give rise to positive artistic attributes. *Do the Right Thing* (1984) benefits from the very different conceptions of one of its central characters possessed by director Spike Lee and actor Danny Aiello. As the writer and director of the film, Lee is undoubtedly the "dominant" author of the film, but to cast him as the single author of the film would be to mischaracterize Aiello's authorial role and to be blind to the way in which the film's complexity in relation to the character

he plays arises as an unintended by-product of a conflict of intentions. Gaut urges that in place of the literary analogy that underpins single-author models, we treat film authorship on the model of jazz improvisation, where multiple creative agents must respond to one another in an intrinsically collaborative artistic project (2010: 132).

Another topic of sustained interest in film theory and the philosophy of film is the distinction between fiction and nonfiction, and the definition of each. And in this domain we find some sharply contrasting perspectives. Film theorists of a broadly post-structural stripe have been skeptical of the distinction, holding that the unavoidable processes of selection and arrangement involved in the making of nonfiction points towards the ways in which such films invent or create, rather than simply discover, the meanings that they embody. Philosophers in the analytic tradition have suggested that to focus narrowly on the formal and stylistic construction of nonfictions, in pursuing a definition of nonfiction, is to look in the wrong place. What enables us to distinguish fictions from nonfictions is the *stance* that each embodies towards what it represents. While fictions are defined by the "fictive stance" – one which invites us to imagine the events and agents that they represent – nonfictions are characterized by an "assertive stance": they invite us to *believe* that what they represent is true in the actual world, and not merely in a fictional world. Contemporary filmmaking has certainly thrown up many works which "intermix" fictional and nonfictional material and conventions; but it is invariably possible to determine whether a work is at root a fiction incorporating documentary aspects, or vice versa. Moreover, the existence of a boundary zone inhabited by such hybrid cases hardly makes the basic contrast disappear (Plantinga 1997; Smith 2009).

Finally, it is worth noting a resurgence of interest in the question of the putative "specificity" of film. As I have noted, although this question was central to debate among early and classical theorists, it was largely ignored by theorists from the 1960s onwards, and arguments in favor of specificity were debunked by Carroll in the 1990s. A new wave of writing on the topic suggests that, notwithstanding Carroll's clarion call to "forget the medium!" (2003), it is no accident that the concepts of medium and media persist, and that we cannot eliminate them altogether (Smith 2006b; and see Turvey 2008 for a revisionist analysis of the nature of medium-specificity claims in a range of classical theorists). Gaut (2010) has mounted the most sustained and elaborate rehabilitation of medium specificity; like the other contemporary work in philosophy of film discussed here, his arguments on film draw extensively on related debates in the philosophy of art and aesthetics more generally. Gaut refines our understanding both of what constitutes a "medium," as well as what the claim of "specificity" amounts to: a medium is defined by a set of materials used in a particular way, and properties are specific to a medium insofar as they differ from those of other media. Defining "specificity" in terms of "uniqueness" sets the bar needlessly and unjustifiably high, disregarding the web of interconnection and overlap among various media; but eliminating specificity altogether deprives us of an important way of recognizing and explaining the character and value of individual films and types of filmmaking. A suitably "deflated" version of "medium specificity" allows us to steer a path between these two perils.

In all but a few benighted corners, film has been accepted as an art. But the way in which it fulfills artistic criteria, given its distinctive technological character – a character

which has evolved and continues to evolve – is a fascinating and far from settled matter. The continuing value and interest of the early and classical theorists derives from the novelty of the problem they faced, and the severity of the prejudices they opposed. Extravagant as some of the claims of such figures as Arnheim, Bazin and Eisenstein may seem today, as we can see in the revival of debate around medium specificity, their insights continue to inspire – as theses to defend, to modify and to critique – the efforts of contemporary theorists and philosophers of film to analyze the distinctive nature of film art.

See also Kant (Chapter 5), Formalism (Chapter 9), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Interpretation (Chapter 30), Imagination and make-believe (Chapter 31), Fiction (Chapter 32), Depiction (Chapter 35), Art and knowledge (Chapter 37), High art versus low art (Chapter 46), Videogames (Chapter 54), Photography (Chapter 56).

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54
VIDEOGAMES

Grant Tavinor

Recent videogames continue to surprise and impress with their artistic sophistication. Their development, moreover, is credibly seen as something new in art. Games such as the open-world adventure western *Red Dead Redemption* give the impression of being a kind of interactive cinema where the player imaginatively steps into a fictional world to discover the story of her character, a story that depends on decisions that she makes. The result is a beautiful, complex and meaningful work of art.

This increased sophistication and apparent distinctiveness, paired with the rise of videogames as an enormous cultural and commercial phenomenon, has led to increased academic interest in videogames and gaming culture. In recent years there has been a proliferation of philosophical writing about videogames. For the philosophy of the arts the interest in videogames derives from how the new medium raises or even alters certain enduring concerns such as the definition of art, the ontological standing of works of art, the nature of authorship and performance, and of appreciation and criticism. This chapter surveys some of the early steps that have been taken to assess these issues.

Are videogames art?

Given their historical origin in simple games like *Pong*, *Space Invaders* and *Pac Man* – none of which seems much like art – the most obvious philosophical question pertaining to videogames is whether they are in fact a form of art. This question constitutes a long-standing and often heated debate within gaming culture itself. Many gamers don't see the need to claim videogames are a form of art, are positively opposed to applying the label, or are suspicious that doing so is an act of highbrow cultural appropriation that will spoil the simple fun of gaming. Why even think that videogames are art when their simple gaming pleasures are so obvious?

The initial plausibility of the ascription comes from the observation of videogames doing things that are very *art-like* and of the producers of games taking on concerns of an artistic nature. Despite the features that situate *Red Dead Redemption* firmly within its videogaming heritage – the player completes missions by performing various tasks, and spends a great deal of time shooting at things – the game is recognizably within the revisionist Western cinematic genre. *Red Dead Redemption* is set in the last

days of the Old West and tells the story of John Marston as he hunts down the members of his old criminal gang. Around Marston, the wildness of the West is being subdued by the forces of technology and civilization, and through this the game explores themes of freedom, violence and revenge. *Red Dead Redemption* is emotionally affecting and we connect with its characters and the situations they find themselves in. All of this is set within a beautiful visual environment that is depicted with evident skill and style and that frequently produces strikingly evocative scenes. These are all things we see in works of art, and are aspects that connect *Red Dead Redemption* to other established artistic kinds such as film, literature and the visual arts.

It is possible to formalize these casual observations into an argument by considering games such as *Red Dead Redemption* in terms of the definition of art. By comparing the features found in videogames with those that comprise the conditions stipulated by a definition, we should be able to come to some decision about the art status of such games (Smuts 2005). Of course, definitions of art are controversial, but this controversy can be skirted by employing a disjunctive definition or cluster theory for this task. When so considered there is ample reason to think that videogames are, at least in some instances, works of art (Lopes 2010; Tavinor 2009).

Disjunctive and/or cluster theories of art pick out qualities such as aesthetic properties, the display of a high degree of skill or creativity, the application of criticism, emotional expressivity, the presentation of intellectually challenging or meaningful ideas, formal complexity, imaginative experience, individual point of view or style, as definitive or characteristic features of art (Dutton 2009; Gaut 2000). Some early videogames such as *Space Invaders* and *Pong* have few if any of the listed features. But there are also games that include almost all of these qualities, and indeed the historical trend has been toward games that cover more and more of the characteristic territory of the arts. While I will not perform the task here, I think it is possible to identify almost all of these art-typical features in recent videogames like *Red Dead Redemption*, *BioShock* and *LA Noire* (Tavinor 2009: 180–90). It would be unfair to withhold the designation *art* from videogames when individually they have so many of the features we think are characteristic of the arts.

While it is clear that videogames share many of the characteristic features of art, it is also possible that they have qualities that disqualify their membership of the category. This formal challenge is frequently used to argue against the idea that videogames are art. Much of the heat in the public debate around the idea that videogames are art owes to some pronouncements by the film critic Roger Ebert (2005, 2010). Though not a philosopher, Ebert has been the most prominent mouthpiece for several popular arguments for why games are not art. He notes that "One obvious difference between art and games is that you can win a game. It has rules, points, objectives, and an outcome," and that genuine arts such as theater, film and literature, "are things you cannot win; you can only experience them" (2010). Rules, objectives and competition are features, according to Ebert, that disqualify an item from being an artwork. Ebert's intuition is bolstered by the observation that games and sports, of which rules, points and winning conditions are characteristic, have typically not been included within the arts.

Ebert also thinks that the fact a player can alter what occurs in their works counts as a deficiency in videogames, and one that may disqualify them from being art:

"Video games by their nature require player choices, which is the opposite of the strategy of serious film and literature, which requires authorial control" (Ebert 2005). Genuine art, for Ebert, is created by an artist alone, and experiencing it involves submitting to the will of that artist. The interactivity of videogames undermines both of these because it puts the player in control of the experience.

It is not clear that the presence of competition or player control really disqualifies videogames from being art. To establish that art cannot have these qualities requires an additional argument and this is not something Ebert provides. Perhaps in the case of rules and competition he has in mind the Kantian idea that the experience of art must be *disinterested*, and that videogames have rules, points, objectives, shows that players are surely interested in winning them. But it might be noted that there is also a tradition of seeing games as fostering an attitude of disinterest (Huizinga 1950: 13). Furthermore, in their guise in *Red Dead Redemption*, such rules and objectives look more like formal features that structure the experience of the player, than features that stipulate winning or losing conditions. Indeed, it is just not clear that one can "win" the game of *Red Dead Redemption* in its single-player mode in the sense that one would win a traditional game such as chess.

It may be a merely contingent fact that previous art has not had such qualities. Even if competition and interactivity are not present in previous art this may owe to the limitations of previous artistic media rather than to any inherent conflict between these features and genuine art. The competitive nature of videogames may illustrate the development of a medium that allows games to be depicted in an artistic way (Tavinor 2009: 193). Similarly, that games are interactive does not disqualify them from being art, but may be a development of a *new kind of art*. As Berys Gaut notes, interactive cinema only became possible with the cinematic application of real-time computer processing (2010: 18). Indeed, far from compromising the idea that videogames are art, that videogames are interactive works may constitute a unique artistic capacity that allows for expressive artistic modes not previously seen.

I suspect that it is the close association of videogames with popular culture and the commercial world that is the main barrier to critics such as Ebert accepting that videogames are art. Videogames are mass produced, and to sell as many copies as possible they are designed to appeal to the greatest number of consumers. Hence they are designed to be easily understood and to be unchallenging. Furthermore, one might think that they are typically formulaic and lacking in creativity. These are qualities we do not see in genuine art. Admittedly, these charges are appropriately aimed at some videogames. But as Noël Carroll has argued for the mass arts generally, these features cannot disqualify items from being art, because most of them can be seen in uncontested works of art such as the literary works of Dickens (Carroll 1998: 16).

Moreover, one should not assume that videogames cannot be challenging or creative. *BioShock* is a case in point; though its gameplay is a rather traditional mix of exploration and combat, which explains its success in appealing to a mass audience, the game includes some highly sophisticated rumination on politics and philosophy that, though lost on many players, provides ample opportunity for thought for the more engaged portion of its audience. It is worth noting that while Carroll only mentions videogames in passing, he has had a significant influence on their philosophical study because much of the work in this area owes a debt to his philosophical

dismantling of the theoretical opposition to the mass arts. In particular he has developed a definition of the mass arts that encompasses television, popular film and music, and perhaps even videogames (1998: 196).

Assuming that videogames are properly regarded as being among the arts, a further question presents itself: "What kind of artwork are videogames?" Which of the arts is videogaming most like? In his recent study of the cinematic arts, Gaut considers videogames as a case of "interactive digital cinema" and employs them to examine theories about the medium of cinema (2010). Similarly, Aaron Meskin and Jon Robson have considered whether videogames are an instance of the art of the moving image (2010).

Dominic Lopes notes that questioning which of the arts videogames are most like "assumes that new art inevitably resembles traditional art" (2010: 114). He asks whether in fact the art in computer games derives from their interactive aspects, and so considers that videogames may be art, not despite being games, but in virtue of this fact. Lopes concludes that videogames are best thought of as a species of the computer art that is his principal focus, an art form that is in part typified by its interactive nature. Videogames constitute the popular end of the spectrum of this computer art (2010: 122).

Interactive art

Hence, another way to categorize videogames, and a way they genuinely do seem distinct from other forms of art, is to treat them as a species of *interactive art*; the difference that led writers such as Ebert to resist the idea that games are art, may instead be used to characterize the distinctiveness of the art of videogames. Indeed, the most interesting philosophical issues with videogames as a form of art derive from their interactivity.

The plausibility that videogames are interactive comes from the casual observation of their features, especially when compared to previous forms of art. Compare *Red Dead Redemption* to the 1992 western *Unforgiven*. In the film *Unforgiven*, there is a scene where Clint Eastwood's character rides his horse into the lonely distance (as cowboys have the habit of doing). There is a similar scene in *Red Dead Redemption*, but it has a key difference because in this case it is the player that chooses to ride into the distance. Some hours into the game, Marston finds himself on the southern shore of the great river that separates America from Mexico in the game world. Mounting a horse that has been left by bandits, the player-character begins to ride into Mexico, suddenly accompanied by a song that expresses the dreadful uncertainty of what is to come. This scene in *Red Dead Redemption* is now famous for the expressive power that follows from allowing the player an active role in this familiar cinematic trope.

Despite this plausibility that games are interactive, there is still a good deal of debate around the meaning and applicability of the concept. Within games studies and technology writing there have been a number of attempts to characterize the concept of interactivity, but also some skepticism. Lev Manovich claims that the term is "too broad" to be theoretically useful; to say that "human–computer interfaces" are interactive is a "tautology" (Manovich 2001: 55). Game theorist Espen Aarseth is skeptical of the concept because of the typically vague way in which it is used (1997).

Philosophers have been more receptive of the idea that videogames are interactive in an interesting sense, and that the term may be crucial in understanding the issues of ontology, performance, authorship, appreciation and criticism that are particular to videogames (Lopes 2010; Gaut 2010; Tavinor 2011). Though he notes that the term is frequently an empty "buzzword," Dominic Lopes has argued that genuinely interactive works are those "whose structural properties are partly determined by the interactor's actions" where a work's structural properties are understood as, "whatever intrinsic or representational properties it has the apprehension of which are necessary for aesthetic engagement with it" (2001: 68). And so the ride-into-Mexico episode of *Red Dead Redemption* is interactive because it occurs only if the player chooses to engage in the sequence, and exactly what happens in the sequence is partly controlled by how the player behaves (though other random elements such as weather and time of day also determine its content).

Not just any user choice is sufficient to comprise genuine interactivity, however. In an article that offers an alternative conception of interactivity, Aaron Smuts contends that there are counterexamples to Lopes's theory comprised of cases in which a user can change the aesthetic structure of a work but where we do not think that the work is thereby made interactive (2009). For example, he thinks that if we read the chapters of a novel out of order this would have the effect of making the novel interactive under Lopes's definition, because the order in which the events of a narrative occur has a clear impact on the aesthetic structure of the work (Smuts 2009: 61).

Lopes's theory can be saved from such objections by referring to *prescribed changes*. Reading the chapters of a novel out of order is not sufficient to make that novel interactive, and nor does it change the order of the events in the work (which we intuitively think is a different thing from any of its particular readings). This is because changing the work instance in this case is not prescribed by the author in the way that such changes are prescribed and indeed encouraged in interactive works. In a genuinely interactive work such as *Red Dead Redemption*, such changes *are* prescribed, and the game provides the means by which the player can make the changes. In this case, the various narrative elements are cued to certain geographical locations or character interactions in the game world so that their order is contingent on the exploration of the player. Lopes's later definition has it that "a work of art is interactive just in case it prescribes that the actions of its users help generate its display" (Lopes 2010: 36).

Berys Gaut, responding to the problem that in the performance arts performers are prescribed to make choices that determine the aesthetic qualities of a work's instances without thereby making those works interactive, argues that the reference to the user needs to be replaced by reference to the *audience* specifically (2010: 143). Hence, for Gaut "a work is interactive just in case it authorizes that its *audience's* actions partly determine its instances and their features" (2010: 143).

Videogames and ontology

Videogames are multiple instance works, and so their ontology may be amenable to a type/token formalization often used for other mass arts such as film and popular

music. Because of their interactivity, however, videogames have tokens that are subject to a degree of variation not seen in these other mass arts. Individual tokens or playings of *Red Dead Redemption* can produce profoundly different experiences, in terms of the content, length, pacing, direction and conclusion of the experience. So while in a screening of *Unforgiven*, one can expect the plot events to follow a set course every time it is viewed, in *Red Dead Redemption* one cannot have such expectations because the order in which narrative events occur is influenced by the player. Given that the individual tokens of a videogame work type differ so much, how then do all these varied instances count as the *same* work? Indeed, do they?

Solving this problem is a matter of explaining how in interactive works a work type can produce a multitude of varied tokens. Crucial to Lopes's later development of his theory of interactivity is the notion of a "display," which is the term he applies to the "structured entity" via which we perceptually engage with an artwork (2010: 4). All artworks have displays, but an interactive work can have numerous and varied displays each of which is a token produced by audience interaction with a work type.

In interactive computer artworks and videogames the work type is comprised in part of a computational artifact, specifically, an *algorithm*. Algorithms are formal artifacts comprised of well-defined rules that allow for computation. They specify input states and output states, and describe a function leading from one to the other. Algorithms can be used for all sorts of computational processes, from arithmetical calculations to rendering computer graphics, but their significance here is that the ontology of a videogame work type can be characterized as an algorithm, because videogame displays are generated by rule-following computational processes. When a videogame is played, the algorithm produces the output of a graphical display from the input the player makes into the controls. In videogames such algorithms are sometimes referred to as "game mechanics."

Though it seems a necessary component, an algorithm alone is not sufficient to explain videogame ontology. Because algorithms are implementation neutral, a single algorithm can be instantiated in different programs to produce different material effects. Hence, the computational artifact that underlies the work type in a videogame is an algorithm *as interpreted* in terms of a set of artistic assets (Tavinor 2011). Here *interpretation* draws on the sense used in propositional logic where a formula is given a material interpretation by filling in its variables. This combination of algorithm and art design allows the theory to meet intuitions about how different games can have near-identical game mechanics, and to explain various game practices that involve the separate consideration of the game algorithm and its artistic interpretation (Tavinor 2011).

Hence, in my view the instancing of videogames does not involve the *templates* which seem to be a necessary part of mass arts such as film and popular music (Carroll 1998: 218). The term *template* is ambiguous between a pattern that is used to produce multiple qualitatively identical tokens of a type, as in the production of bank notes, artistic prints, and mass-produced artifacts such as stamped metal parts, and a device that is used to impose formal regularity on a number of different works, such as a journal style guide. Some of Carroll's remarks, such as where he notes that mass-art tokens are identical "in the sense that two dimes of the same

minting are identical" (Carroll 1998: 201) make it clear that it is the former conception of the term that is appropriate in this context. A work algorithm stands in a different relation to token playings or performances of the work than such a template has to its tokens.

Challenging this claim, Aaron Meskin and Jon Robson have argued that "[e]ach particular token playing of a game involves the use of some template (a CD, DVD or downloaded piece of software)" and so videogame tokens are still ontologically rooted in templates (2010: 556). I find their arguments unconvincing. First, distribution templates such as DVDs and CDs are not necessary for videogames, because in arcade games and dedicated consoles the program is included in the hardware itself. Second, even granted that in their examples CDs and DVDs are templates, what they are a template of is not a performance token or display, but of the program that is used to distribute the work algorithm. This template does not play a direct role in the production of performance instances. It is illuminating to compare this to a DVD that contains the template of a simple calculator program as a file: while the program itself is contained on the disc in the form of a template, the calculations that are eventually produced by the calculator when it is installed on a computer have no such template. A videogame performance token is equivalent to these calculations and their display, and not to the program itself, and so their tokens do not have templates even if their programs usually do.

Performance and appreciation

This interactive ontology has an important impact on the performative and appreciative role of the player of videogames. Much of what players do in playing videogames gives the impression that they are *performers*. In many forms of art the instantiation of a work relies on the actions of a further agent besides the author. In mass arts such as film, this role is typically a nonartistic one in that the projectionist must perform a merely technical role so that the film is shown correctly. In the performance arts, however, the intervening role is seen as artistic in its own right. The interactive role of a player in a videogame seems more than merely technical, but at the same time it differs from that of a genuine performer, because unlike performance arts such as dance, the performance of a videogame player is not itself evaluated for its aesthetic qualities. For this reason I have expressed my doubts about seeing a player as a performer (Tavinor 2009: 58–59).

And yet, perhaps there may be a reason to rethink this conclusion. Gaut argues that when we compare interactive cinema to the traditional performance arts, "there is a difference, but not one that undermines the claim that the audience takes on the performer's role" (2010: 146). Gaut thinks that there are two necessary components of performance: "compliance" and "interpretation" (2010: 145). Compliance occurs where the performer aims to produce the art instance as per the original artist's instructions. But in performance arts this typically leaves open a certain space to provide an interpretation of the work. Gaut notes that in interactive cinema such as videogames, compliance is "automated" because interacting with the work – bar *exploiting* or *hacking* it – cannot help but produce a properly formed instance of the

game. Thus in videogames an important part of the performative role is taken over by the computer. Nevertheless, videogames still allow for a sense of performative interpretation in addition to this, as the player is able to search out interesting interactions that reveal the work's artistic properties.

Though it is a valuable distinction, I wonder whether even this is fine-grained enough to capture the performative aspects of videogames. The distinction between automated compliance and interpretation leaves out an aspect of *performative compliance* that is evident when games *nudge* players into performing actions. For example, in the ride into Mexico episode of *Red Dead Redemption* players are not forced to comply with the game, but nevertheless they stand to miss out on something important if they fail to take the hint that they should ride into Mexico. While immediately getting off the horse and hunting an armadillo would realize a valid instance of the game, this would effectively spoil the episode because it halts the soundtrack element. Similarly, failing to get on the horse means that the episode is not even cued. Some players admit that they missed the episode, and usually express annoyance for having done so. A more sensitive player will understand that they are invited to comply with the work to produce a well-formed instance. Videogames are filled with these implicit instructions. Hence, I think that as well as automated compliance, videogames playings may also involve a type of performative compliance, though one that relies on the player understanding subtle designed cues.

One of the key benefits in employing the philosophy of the arts to theorize about games is that it can illuminate the appreciative practices surrounding videogames. In a classic paper, Kendall Walton argues that appreciating an artwork demands that one understand that the artwork falls under a particular category of art because only then can its aesthetic features be grasped (Walton 1970). This is no less true of videogames, and in this case the appreciation and criticism of the art form rests on the acknowledgment of its nature as interactive art.

Much videogame appreciation focuses on the variations in playings that can be generated from a single game. One of the virtues of using a type/token formalization of multiple instance art ontology is that it explains how, when engaging with an artwork, audiences can attend to the particular display but also to the work of which the display is but one instance. In videogaming, this allows players to interpret how the way the game is changed by their own actions leads to special artistic meaning. This is most evident in those videogames that have branching episodes or multiple endings such as *Grand Theft Auto IV* and *BioShock*. In these cases, replaying the game reveals that making different decisions can impact the outcome of the story. But even with a single playing, knowing that your action is one among a number of options can make an interpretative difference. In a key scene in *Grand Theft Auto IV*, Niko, the player-character, finally confronts the man he has been in search of for most of the game. You are given the option to take the man's life, or show mercy. Sparing the wretched man's life was for me the best reflection of Niko's character, and it felt like the right interpretation to make of the fiction: Niko, for me, was a good man in bad circumstances.

In such cases, the meaning of the work depends on the optional nature of the story content, and yet the interactivity of the medium of videogaming makes possible another quite different means of expression. *Red Dead Redemption* does not have

a branching ending; in the end, unable to escape the consequences of his past life, John is gunned down and dies on his family farm. The finality of John's death is emotionally affecting – the player has become attached to the character through the many previous hours of gameplay, and it is genuinely sad to see his end – but this is only half of the impact of this sequence. This is because in the context of an interactive work, the inescapable nature of John's death has a special expressive significance.

To see why, we need a little more theory. Gaut argues that the expressivity of cinema as a medium is located in the variable means with which it can represent content (2010: 47). So, because black and white is standard to films of the black-and-white era, the fact that a particular scene is in black and white in such films cannot itself be expressive. But in cinema after the invention of color film, where black and white is a variable trait, a sequence of black and white can be employed to have an expressive impact, an example being *The Wizard of Oz*, where the black and white bookends the fantasy of the colored middle section, expressively emphasizing it. Similarly, in noninteractive film, the fact that the events in the work are fixed does not make a special expressive contribution: that Morgan Freeman's character cannot but die does not express anything in *Unforgiven* (even though the unexpectedness of his death is both shocking and saddening). But in videogames, where interactivity makes such plot fixity a variable feature, the unavoidable nature of an event can have such an expressive import.

Only rarely do player-characters *really* die in videogames: in gaming death almost always leads to the player *respawning* or restarting the game to play over the episode in which they died. The permanency of John's death thus calls out for interpretation, and indeed its significance is clear. John is representative of the freedom of the Old West, and from the very beginning of the game the encroachment of the civilizing forces of technology and government makes it clear that the days of the Old West are numbered. John's mode of operation as a free agent and his brand of self-help justice are a part of the old world, and are no longer sustainable in the world to come. That John's death is at the hands of the federal government and its uniformed army emphasizes this meaning. Of course, this tragic point could surely be made in noninteractive cinema, but in doing so a film could not avail itself of the correspondence between medium and content that *Red Dead Redemption* can in making the same point. That *Red Dead Redemption* can express this meaning in this formally satisfying way is hence dependent on its interactive form.

See also Definitions of art (Chapter 21), Ontology of art (Chapter 23), High art versus low art (Chapter 46), Film (Chapter 53).

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55
COMICS

Aaron Meskin

What are comics doing as a topic in a scholarly introduction to the field of philosophical aesthetics? Although they are sometimes referred to as *le neuvième art* (the ninth art) in francophone countries, and the American critic Gilbert Seldes counted them among the seven "lively arts" (Seldes 1924), comics have rarely been considered one of the individual arts worthy of philosophical attention. Surely some of this has to do with skepticism about the existence of distinctive philosophical problems raised by comics (Meskin 2011). I suspect that there is also lingering doubt about the status of comics as an individual art; that is, rather than as a form of entertainment, kitsch or mere popular/mass culture. And even those who grudgingly acknowledge comics to be a distinct art form may still believe it to be a minor art or, at least, one of lower value than painting, poetry, sculpture and the other fine or high arts. In this chapter, I shall focus on these latter two issues first – the question of comics' status as an art form and the value of comics – before providing a brief overview of the wide range of philosophical problems the category raises.

Comics as medium and art form

Like "film," "photography" and "painting," the term "comics" can be used to refer to artifacts in a distinctive medium or family of media which may, but need not, count as art. Just as there are paintings that are not art (Wollheim 1987: 13), so too there are comics (e.g. various sorts of instructional comics) that are not art in the sense in which philosophical aesthetics is primarily interested. (See Eisner 1985 for a discussion of instructional comics.) These items belong to the medium of comics, where by "medium" I refer not a physical medium but, rather, an established way of working with materials that may, but need not, result in works of art (see e.g. Levinson 1984: 7).

Nevertheless, some comics are unquestionably art. As Seldes wrote: "With those who hold a comic strip cannot be a work of art I shall not traffic" (Seldes 1924: 231). Why say this? The first reason is that it is unlikely that any plausible theory of art – essentialist or nonessentialist – could be marshaled to exclude *all* comics from the category. Let us begin by considering comics in relation to some standard essentialist theories of art. Although a case can be made for the existence, or at least

the possibility, of nonrepresentational comics (see Molotiu 2009 for some potential examples), the vast majority of comics are full of representational content. Some comics may only express emotions in a very generic sense (e.g. the teen angst expressed by many superhero comics), but there are others, Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* for example, that seem to be expressive of individualized emotions. Comics, after all, have both literary and pictorial dimensions (Pratt 2009a), both of which provide opportunities for expression. It is hard to imagine what a formless comic would be; more significantly, some comics (such as Alan Moore's *Watchmen*) have been highly valued – at least in part – because of their formal qualities (see e.g. Wolk 2007: 237–38). There are comics which do not meet the conditions of the institutional theory of art since instructional comics do not seem to be "of a kind created to be presented to an artwork public" (Dickie 1984: 80) nor do they possess aspects which have had status as candidates for appreciation conferred on them by someone acting on behalf of the artworld (Dickie 1974: 34). But other comics, for example those shown at the *Hypercomics: The Shapes of Comics to Come* exhibit at London's Pump House Gallery in 2010, do seem to be of a kind created to be presented to an artwork public, and many of Robert Crumb's comics appear to have had the relevant status conferred upon them. (Consider, for example, the *Masters of American Comics* exhibition which toured between 2005 and 2007 and the exhibition at London's Whitechapel Gallery in 2005 entitled *Robert Crumb: A Chronicle of Modern Times*.) Aesthetic definitions of art initially seem to present the greatest challenge to comics since the vast majority of comics Western audiences are familiar with (e.g. superhero comics and newspaper cartoon strips) might be thought to traffic primarily in goods far removed from aesthetic experience and aesthetic appreciation, but many comics are rich in intentionally exhibited aesthetic properties. Chris Ware's comics, such as *Jimmy Corrigan: the Smartest Kid on Earth*, as well as Winsor McCay's remarkable early twentieth-century cartoon strip, *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, display mastery of color, panel design and draftsmanship, and both cry out for characterization in terms of beauty. There is no reasonable conception of aesthetic experience which excludes *all* comics from the realm of objects which might provide (and be intended to provide) such. Although comics have been intended to be regarded in a wide variety of ways, some, perhaps all, comics have been intended for regard in at least some of the ways in which prior works of art are or were correctly regarded (Levinson 1979). And while some comics may not embody their meanings – as Arthur Danto (1997) suggests something must do in order to be art – other comics (most famously Art Spiegelman's *Maus*) do seem to have found a mode of presentation that is appropriate for their content.

So much for some of the leading essentialist accounts of art; leading antiessentialist accounts look to have the same implication. So, for example, some comics may fail to possess many of the putatively nonessential yet "criterial" properties for being works of art, but as is clear from the above discussion, other comics surely possess a good number of these criteria (e.g. they possess positive aesthetic qualities, express emotions, exhibit individual points of view, are original, involve a high degree of skill, etc.) (Gaut 2000: 28). Moreover, other methods of identifying works of art and art forms (e.g. by attending to contexts of display or by using historical narratives) all point in the same direction. I have already mentioned the *Masters of American Comics*

and *Hypercomics* exhibitions – these are only a couple of the many recent cases where comics have been exhibited in art museums or galleries. (And there is the Centre Belge de la Bande Dessinée in Brussels, as well as the Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art in New York City.) Insofar as we rely on contextual cues to determine whether something is art or not, these exhibitions and museums cannot but persuade us that some comics are art. Finally, consider Noël Carroll's narrative approach to identifying art. On his account, the normal way of establishing that some contested object is a work of art is by means of producing an accurate historical narrative that "links the contested work to preceding art making practices and contexts in such a way that the work … can be seen to be the intelligible outcome of recognizable modes of thinking and making of a sort already commonly adjudged to be artistic" (Carroll 1993: 316). Similarly, we identify contested "systems of presentation" (art forms, media, genres) by producing narratives of their "development out of existing, acknowledged practices" (Carroll 1993: 324). That is, we identify some object or set of objects as art by constructing true stories which show how their production emerged from practices that are already accepted to be artistic. We can plausibly tell such a story about the creation of comics in the nineteenth century as a development out of the traditions of narrative painting and, perhaps most importantly, the printed graphic satire produced by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British artists, such as Hogarth, Gillray and Cruikshank.

So some comics are art. That being said, it does not follow that there is an art or art form of comics. After all, some urinals are works of art, but urinals do not compose an art form. Similarly, many big paintings are artworks but there is no art form of big paintings. Urinals and big paintings are art, when they are art, in virtue of belonging to more inclusive art forms. So, for example, *Fountain* is a work of art in virtue of being a sculpture (or, perhaps, a ready-made), and big paintings are art, when they are art, in virtue of being paintings. So even if some comics are art, the question of whether there is an art form of comics remains open. Perhaps comics are art, when they are art, in virtue of belonging to some distinct art form such as literature or drawing or printmaking.

It is contentious whether some comics are, in fact, literature (Meskin 2009), but since there are many successful wordless or silent comics it is implausible that all comics are art merely in virtue of belonging to that category. Since not all comics are drawn (there are photographically produced comics called *fotoromanzi* or *fotonovelas*) and a persuasive case has been made for the possibility of entirely nonpictorial comics (Cook 2011), it is unlikely that comics are art only in virtue of belonging to the art form of drawing. Similarly, there are comics that are not produced by printing methods (e.g. web-comics and one-off hand-drawn comics), so the suggestion that comics are art in virtue of belonging to the/an art form of printmaking is implausible. More significantly, neither all art drawings nor all fine art prints belong to the critical comparison class for comics (and vice versa). We do not treat Leonardo's drawings as appropriate works for comparison when appreciating comics; nor are comics treated as in the comparison class for Jasper Johns's prints. Could it be that comics are art in virtue of belonging to a number of different art forms? This is implausible. For it seems that all comics belong in the appropriate comparison class for all other comics. It is always reasonable to compare one comic to any other comic for critical

purposes; moreover, this is the case in virtue of the fact that they are comics. (See Lopes 2010: 17, for relevant discussion.) Comics, then, constitute a distinct art form. How valuable an art form?

The value(s) of comics

It is tempting to think that not all categories of art (i.e. art forms, genres) are equal. Some kinds of artworks are, plausibly, "more important to the life of society" than others (Carroll 2009: 192). Aristotle famously rated tragedy over epic. Moreover, it must be admitted that the number of unarguable masterpieces within the form of comics are few. The majority of mainstream comics produced in the West (newspaper cartoon strips, superhero comics) do not rise to an especially high artistic level. Are, then, comics a minor art form, one of significantly less value than other more established arts? One approach to answering this question would be to sum (or perhaps average) the values of all actually existing comics and compare that with the sum (or average) of other extant art forms. My sense is that this project, even if possible, would not provide us with much of philosophical interest. The value of comics, in the most philosophically interesting sense, surely has to do with what comics *can* do – what capacities they have, not merely what they have done. For similar reasons, induction on the past history of comics does not seem like a good strategy for determining the value of the form. The question, again, is what possibilities comics allow for, not what they likely will do. My suspicion is that skepticism about the value of comics relies on an overemphasis on the value of extant comics and not enough attention to the possibilities of comics.

Elizabeth Telfer has argued that food is a "minor" art because food is "necessarily transient," is incapable of possessing (representational) meaning, cannot express emotion and cannot move us or "shake us fundamentally" in the way the major arts can (Telfer 1996: 58–59). Whatever one thinks of Telfer's analysis of food's capacities, it is clear that none of these putative failings applies to comics. Comics may have suffered from being a largely disposable art form, but they are not *necessarily* transient. As mentioned above, they surely have the capacity to represent and express. Joe Sacco's documentary comic about an (in)famous UN-designated "safe area" in Bosnia, *Safe Area: Goražde*, certainly seems to have the capacity to move us profoundly through its attention to the visual and verbal detail of ordinary life in the midst of horror. So comics cannot be construed a minor art for these reasons.

It might be thought that comics are essentially of lesser value than fine or high arts such as poetry and painting because the former is (essentially) a mass art and, hence, suffers from the fundamental aesthetic weakness of works in that category. Comics are, in fact, *typically* a mass art; that is, the vast majority of them are "multiple instance" artworks which are "produced and distributed by a mass technology" and intentionally designed to be accessible to large and largely untutored audiences (Carroll 1998: 196). But there are two reasons for being suspicious of this route to the dismissal of comics. In the first place, the arguments against mass art are far from convincing (see Carroll 1998); there is no good reason to think all works of mass art are artistically compromised merely in virtue of belonging to that category. In

addition, comics are not *essentially* mass art. Leaving aside the question of ontology and distribution for the moment, it is enough to point to the existence of avant-garde comics which are not designed for accessibility (e.g. Art Spiegelman's experimental *Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!*) to show that there are comics which do not belong to the category of mass art.

Comics are, like opera, a hybrid form (Meskin 2009) – they derive "from the actual combination or interpenetration of earlier art forms" (Levinson 1984: 6). The hybrid nature of opera has often been seen as presenting a problem for it; that is, the existence of an inherent tension between music and fictional narrative or drama (Kivy 2002; Levinson 1987) presents a challenge to those who make operas. So, for example, Kivy has argued that music and narrative fiction (the putatively essential elements of opera) are antithetical because the former is inherently rooted in repetition whereas the latter is much less repetitive (Kivy 2002: 153–55). It is not obvious that Kivy is right. Nevertheless, one might wonder whether there is some sort of antithesis or tension at the heart of comics. Is there a "problem of comics" akin to the alleged "problem of opera"? Is there some inherent tension between features of the hybrid art of comics that presents a challenge to comics artists?

There might be thought to be some sort of conflict between two central elements of comics: narration and static pictorial representation. If "succession in time is the province of the poet" and "space is that of the painter" (Lessing 1962: 91) then perhaps comics, which might be said to combine poetry and painting (in some very broad sense), do exhibit an internal tension. However, Lessing's normative "medium specificity" principles (e.g. his suggestion that painting shouldn't aim at the representation of actions) are implausible, both because he underestimated the capacity of still images to successfully represent time and because such normative principles are not so easily derivable from facts about artistic media. Furthermore, as comics and other forms of pictorial narrative have shown, *sequences* of pictures are very good at representing the succession of events. Another source of potential internal tension might be located in the combination of words and images. The film scholar Rudolf Arnheim famously argued that the addition of sound to cinema undercut the latter's artistic capacities (Arnheim 1957), and someone might conceivably argue something similar about the addition of words to pictures (or pictures to words). But Arnheim was just as mistaken as Lessing, as both philosophical argument and the development of sound film have shown. I conclude that there is no obvious inherent tension between the central elements of comics.

Are there significant artistic capacities or values literature and drawing have that comics do not possess? Literature has the capacity to engage with morally serious content in an imaginative and creative fashion (Lamarque and Olsen 1994: 261–67), but comics do too. *Maus*, for example, counts as the tremendous achievement it is in large part because it successfully solves the problem of how to represent the Holocaust and does so in utterly unexpected ways (for example, by means of caricature and the conventions of "funny animal" comics). The textual aspect of comics implies that the virtues of literary language can be possessed by a comic or graphic novel. Concerns about the relative paucity of linguistic content (and concomitant lack of psychological or moral depth) in comics can be assuaged by pointing to examples such as Boom! Comics word-for-word adaptation of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids*

Dream of Electric Sheep? and Robert Crumb's complete comics version of Genesis. Perhaps the works which those comics adapt are not examples of Literature with a capital "L"; nonetheless, the examples suggest that comics can be as textually (and, hence, psychologically and morally) rich as works of traditional literature. Drawings allow us to have visual experiences of things that we would be otherwise unable to see, but the same is true of comics. Comics may delight the senses just as poetry and drawing do. Comics cannot be said to merely promote passive engagement since making sense of the sequence of panels in a comic requires "closure" – the imaginative and inferential process whereby readers fill in the narrative gaps between those panels (McCloud 1993: 60–69). And so on. I conclude that there is nothing artistically significant that literature or drawing – two of our most valuable art forms – can do which comics cannot. So comics constitute a (potentially) valuable art form.

So what philosophical issues does this still-developing form of art raise?

The definition and ontology of comics

What are comics? The comics artist and theorist Scott McCloud characterizes them as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (McCloud 1993: 9). Greg Hayman and Henry Pratt modify and improve on this account in claiming that something is a comic just in case it "is a sequence of discrete, juxtaposed pictures that comprise a narrative, either in their own right or when combined with text" (Hayman and Pratt 2005: 423).

Such accounts, although they have the virtue of inclusivity, have been subjected to criticisms by Aaron Meskin and Roy Cook; the former has argued that comics need not be narrative (Meskin 2007: 371–72) and, as mentioned above, the latter has made a robust case for the existence of nonpictorial comics (Cook 2011). (In brief, something without pictures may count as a comic when it is part of some other comic, e.g. a run of issues, which does possess pictures.) Moreover, it seems that both the McCloud and Hayman/Pratt accounts are too inclusive: both definitions would seem to have difficulty excluding many illustrated children's books from the category of comics (see Meskin 2007: 372–73) as well as works of narrative art produced long before the nineteenth-century invention of comics (e.g. the Bayeux Tapestry, eleventh-century Mexican picture manuscripts, and many historical works of narrative painting such as the triptychs by Bosch). It is open to a defender of the sequential pictorial narrative approach to bite this bullet and simply allow a more expansive category of comics; however, both ordinary usage and critical practice suggest that this sort of nonhistorical approach is misguided. (But see John Holbo 2012 for a creative defense of the significance of McCloud's definition.)

Note that neither of the two definitions discussed above mentions anything about the medium or media in which comics are published. Some other approaches to the definition of comics do involve claims about the ways comics must be produced. David Kunzle, for example, holds that comics must appear (and be originally intended to appear) in a "reproductive … mass medium" (Kunzle 1973: 2), while Anne Elizabeth Moore suggests that comics are essentially "created to be mechanically

reproduced, either in print or on the Web" (Moore 2006: x). If this is right, then comics are necessarily multiples; that is, works of art that allow for instances instead of mere copies. The attraction of such views is that they seem to solve the problem of excluding works such as the Bayeux Tapestry and Renaissance narrative triptychs from the category of comics; their downfall stems from the fact that comics are only standardly, not necessarily, created for mechanical reproduction. There are, plausibly, extant gallery and site-specific comics which are neither reproductive nor created to be mechanically reproduced (Meskin 2012). If this is right, then comics are not essentially multiples.

Comics and the moving image

I have already briefly discussed the relationship between comics and the art forms of literature, drawing and printmaking. It is, however, the art of film or the moving image to which comics are most frequently compared. (In the remainder of this section I shall focus on comics' relationship to the *moving image*, a category that encompasses film but also includes television and computer animation among other things.)

So what is the relationship between comics and the moving image? There are numerous connections between the two forms (movie storyboards look like comics, descriptions of comics often use cinematic language, comics artists often talk about the influence of the moving image on their art, comics have become a prime source of material for Hollywood movies, and so on). Scott McCloud even claims that an unprojected celluloid film reel counts as a "very slow comic" (McCloud 1993: 8). Putting aside that implausible claim, are there deeper similarities which underwrite the phenomena mentioned above?

In a number of papers, Henry Pratt has explored the narrative strategies used by comics and the moving image (2009a, 2009b, 2012). Pratt argues that there are important underlying similarities in the ways these two media tell stories, and that these similarities explain such phenomena as the ever increasing popularity of comics-to-film adaptation. According to Pratt, the media of comics and film both "exert a strong pressure toward narrativity" (2012: 150) and, in fact, narrativity of a certain sort – mimetic, visual narration in which the "storytelling act is one of showing" (ibid.) and this showing is done largely by means of visual appearances. Additionally, narrative in both comics and the moving image is typically "gappy" (i.e. there are frequent jumps in story time and space), and both art forms regularly use these gaps for artistic effect (ibid.: 152–53). Comics and the moving image also share a high capacity for controlling audience attention and use similar devices for doing so (e.g. altering audience perspective on a character or scene by means of camera movement or a succession of panels). It is no wonder filmmakers have found comic books such a good source of material.

Nevertheless, there are significant differences between narration in comics and narration in moving images. Pratt points out that filmmakers have a high degree of control over the pace of audience engagement (at least in ordinary or intended viewing conditions), but the creators of comics are limited in their capacity to do

this and, hence, there is a sense in which consumers of comics have more freedom (e.g. they have a choice as to the rate and order of narrative consumption). The spatial juxtaposition of images in comics, as opposed to the temporal juxtaposition of the moving image, allows comics artists narrative possibilities in virtue of panel and page design that are hard to duplicate in film or television, and it makes the representation of simultaneous events in comics both easy to produce and comprehend. Relatedly, Roy Cook (2012) has argued that the effects produced by certain metafictional comics (for example, comics in which speech and thought bubbles are objectified; that is, where the balloons are part of the fictional world of the comic) cannot be replicated by film, or made sense of by film theory. So comics, he claims, must be understood on their own terms; that is, not just as static films.

Comics and representation

The vast majority of comics involve a combination of language and pictures. Although there are a variety of ways in which language and pictures may combine in comics (McCloud 1993: 153–55), a number of scholars have argued that there is a distinctive relationship between text and images in comics. Robert Harvey writes of the "visual-verbal blend" (Harvey 1979: 644); that is, he claims that the "interdependence" (ibid.: 641) of words and pictures – that neither is entirely satisfactory without the other – is the most "unique and distinguishing characteristic" of comics and central to their evaluation. And Thomas Wartenberg argues that in comics, but not in illustration, "the images and text both contribute at an equally basic level" (Wartenberg 2012: 97) to the fictional world of the work; hence, "the (pictorial) images in comics … are not illustrations of a story-world determined by *the text with which they appear*" (ibid.: 95; original emphasis). Wartenberg's underlying thought is that in illustration the text has a sort of "ontological priority over the image" (ibid.) in that illustration requires faithfulness of images to text. This, he holds, is true of both standard and "canonical" illustration such as Tenniel's illustrations of *Alice in Wonderland*. But, he claims, there is no such ontological priority in the case of comics; even in works such as *Classics Illustrated*, the text *of the comic* does not have priority over the images, although the text of the literary work it is adapted from may. A general concern about all such approaches is that they may overgeneralize – there are, after all, many different styles and genres of comics.

Other topics

Recent work on comics has explored a range of other issues raised by comics such as authorship in the medium (Mag Uidhir 2012), their ethical status (Pratt 2009b), the historical evolution of the art form (Boyd 2010), the question of whether there is a "language of comics" (Hick 2012), funniness in comics (Maynard 2012), the interpretation of works in the form (Carrier 2000) and the nature of comics genres (Abell 2012). As is evident, there are numerous philosophical topics of interest raised by the valuable art form of comics.

See also Definitions of art (Chapter 21), Value of art (Chapter 28), High art versus low art (Chapter 46), Film (Chapter 53).

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56
PHOTOGRAPHY

Dawn M. Wilson

The study of photography is a fast-changing and multifarious enquiry with philosophical significance in aesthetics, art, epistemology, ethics, semiotics and image theory. The object of study is not simply "the photograph," but a group of evolving practices: primarily the production, storage, distribution and viewing of photographic images. Photography is a family of technologies able to fulfill functions such as detection, reproduction, recording, depiction and "manifestation" (Maynard 1997, 2010) and these functions are realized in diverse processes, for example: camera-less photograms; negative–positive printing using paper, glass or film; video stills; and digital data recording. These are studied alongside processes that are not strictly photography but employ associated techniques, such as image-capture through virtual "ray-tracing."

As a medium, or perhaps as a collection of media, photography is acutely responsive to technological developments in camera design and image distribution – innovations often driven by popular, commercial and scientific photography. In these contexts older methods of photographic production and viewing have been largely superseded by digital cameras and electronic display screens. In the artworld, by comparison, production methods still reflect the full history of photography, with artists choosing to work with daguerreotype, cyanotype and salt-printing as readily as using "emulator" technology designed to simulate the effects of these techniques in digital post-processing.

Theory and philosophy: photography from two perspectives

In photography theory and art history, an extensive body of writing about photography employs semiotics, phenomenology, psychoanalysis and cultural theory, particularly Marxism and feminism. Writers with particular influence in this field include André Bazin, Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes and Charles Sanders Peirce (Kriebel 2007; Bate 2009; Bull 2010). In the philosophy of photography, a smaller body of literature addresses different concerns: pictorial representation, epistemic authority, skepticism regarding artistic agency, and the ontology of photographs. In this field the views of Roger Scruton and Kendall Walton have generated extensive debate (Walden 2008). The limited extent of exchange between these two fields of study reflects the more generalized lack of contact between approaches often labeled

"continental" and "analytic." However, there is considerable potential for exploring areas of common interest: for example *Automatism and Agency* (Costello *et al*. 2012) aims to open dialogue between the fields of theory and philosophy. In this collection of essays, theorists and philosophers respond to a dualism that is central to both fields: the automatism of mechanical photographic apparatus and the agency of photographers creating art.

Stephen Bull (2010) has argued that the critical reception of photography is marked by several theoretical dualisms. Photography as a natural phenomenon is posited against photography as the product of cultural construction; the modernist idea of a pure medium-specific essence contends with the postmodernist critique of the possibility that photography has an essential identity; the principle that photographs are objective documents of what lies in front of the camera stands against the view that photographs are governed, consciously or unconsciously, by the photographer's subjectivity. Along with others (Batchen 1997; Edwards 2005; Ritchin 2009), he recommends that these dualisms should be positively recognized as integral to the medium of photography (Bull 2010: 13, 186).

In Costello and Phillips (2009), we suggested that contemporary debates in the philosophy of photography are shaped by foundational intuitions, namely: that the photographic production process is, in some sense, "automatic"; that the resultant images are, in some sense, "realistic"; and that the realism of photographs, in some sense, depends on the automatism of the photographic process. These intuitions generate intractable problems when key concepts such as "automatism" and "agency," or "causation" and "intentionality," are construed in a "zero-sum" opposition. In one such opposition, discussed below, the realism of a photographic image is considered to rule out any capacity for fictional representation. Addressing the central philosophical problems requires clarification of how dualisms of this kind have become entrenched in the critical reception of photography and it remains an open question whether each dualism can indeed be positively recognized or otherwise needs to be contested. To this end, there is much to be gained from looking to the perspectives offered by both theory and philosophy.

Realism, transparency and pictorial representation

The concerns that feature centrally in analytic aesthetics of photography arise from a particular framework of enquiry. Photography, as a relative newcomer of less than 200 years' history, is held up to comparison against long-established forms of pictorial representation such as drawing and painting. An overriding objective for philosophers has been to determine whether or not images produced by photography are different in kind from pictures produced by drawing or painting. Difference in kind may provide a basis for claiming that photographs have distinctive aesthetic and artistic potential, but equally for claiming that photographs are deficient in qualities exemplified by those pictures traditionally acclaimed as art.

In many different forms, it has been suggested that photographs and handmade pictures bear fundamentally different relationships to reality. Through the intentional activity of a human agent, handmade pictures can depict objects and events that are

real or imagined. By comparison it is supposed that photographs are not dependent on the intentional activity of a human agent, but record only the appearance of real objects and events. When it is said that photographs are more "realistic" than other kinds of picture, this can mean that photographs are causally related to real objects at a moment in time, but also that a photographic image visually resembles those objects with great detail and accuracy. These two ideas feature separately or in combination in many accounts of photography. The comparison just sketched and the two ideas about "realism" that emerge from it need to be subjected to scrutiny.

According to Kendall Walton, realism is what makes photographs different in kind to hand-drawn pictures, and photographic realism is in part explained by the property of "transparency" which photographs acquire in virtue of the mechanical photographic process. The metaphor of "transparency" has been commonly used to indicate a defining property of photographs, as well as an associated claim about the distinctive experience of viewing photographs. In general, the term suggests that a photographic image stands in a special relation to the world such that a person viewing the photograph is in some sense able to "see through" the photograph to view the photographed scene itself. Since the publication of "Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism," transparency has become primarily associated with Walton's specific thesis (Walton 1984).

Walton argues that transparency enables the viewer of a photograph to have genuine "perceptual contact" with the photographed objects – this contact is the same natural kind as seeing the world in a mirror or through a telescope. In order for a picture to be transparent, it must fulfill two necessary conditions: (i) the picture must be counterfactually dependent on the photographed scene entirely independently of the beliefs or intentional attitudes of the picture-maker (Walton 2008: 100) and (ii) the structure for discriminating similarities and differences by means of the picture must correspond analogously to the structure of perceiving the world (Walton 2008: 107). Unlike either handmade pictures, which fail the first condition, or mechanically generated descriptions, which fail the second condition, photographs are said to fulfill both necessary conditions for transparency and we literally "see through" photographs to the photographed objects. Walton does not claim that these are sufficient conditions for transparency and does not need to, as his aim is simply to provide the basis for a difference in kind between photographs and handmade pictures that nonetheless puts photographs in the same category as mirrors and telescopes.

In epistemic debate, Walton's transparency thesis has encountered substantial opposition (Warburton 1988; Cohen and Meskin 2004). In defense, Walton insists that transparency is a matter of object perception rather than knowledge acquisition (Walton 2008: 113, 130) and that his project is not to analyze "seeing" in its ordinary sense, but, rather, to introduce an extended category of perceiving which includes both seeing and "seeing-through-photographs" (Walton 2008: 111). Although the second condition of transparency is for "real similarity relations" between seeing the world and seeing the world through the photograph (Walton 2008: 107), Walton believes that even a "fuzzy and badly exposed snapshot" can put us in perceptual contact with the world (Walton 2008: 109). In this regard his account of photographic realism is not primarily concerned to show that photographs are more accurate and detailed sources of information than hand-drawn pictures; instead it is to defend the

intuition that photographs provide a valuable experience of causal connection that hand-drawn pictures cannot offer.

Walton's thesis is properly appreciated when understood in the context of his theory of art as "make-believe" (Walton 1990). We directly "see" the photograph and we indirectly "see" the photographed objects. But we can imagine, or "make-believe," that our experience of indirectly seeing the object is an experience of directly seeing the object and in this way photographs can generate richly interesting fictions within "games" of make-believe (Walton 1990: 329–31). Thus although Walton claims that photographic realism delivers genuine perceptual contact with reality, he is not forced to claim that the viewer of a photograph is restricted to perceiving the real world. In this way, against accusations to the contrary from Noël Carroll and Gregory Currie, Walton has claimed that his transparency thesis does not preclude a photograph from being a representation (Walton 2008: 126). He confirms that "as Patrick Maynard puts it, a photograph may be a *photograph* of one thing, but a *depiction* of something else" (Walton 2008: 114).

Walton's attempt to show that transparency is compatible with depiction will prove significant because in analytic aesthetics, pictorial representation is considered the most pressing challenge for photography. In a minimal sense it seems obvious that photography can produce representational images – photographic images typically have a striking visual resemblance to photographed objects, yet we can see an object in the photograph without being under any illusion that the photograph is that object. But if all photographs are representational in this minimal sense, the challenge that remains is to show how some photographs can sustain aesthetic interest. In "Photography and Representation," an article that has sustained over thirty years of intense debate, Roger Scruton contends that photographs cannot be representational art because it is never possible to take aesthetic interest in a photograph qua representation (Scruton 1981). For Scruton, the principle that a photograph has a merely causal relation to real objects rules out any possibility that the artist could use the medium to express thoughts about the subject matter. Instead, when we view an image strictly with the understanding that it is a photograph, our interest is necessarily confined to the appearance of the photographed objects.

Dominic Lopes notes that Walton's transparency thesis might be thought to give additional weight to Scruton's skeptical argument if formulated as follows: "if seeing a photograph is seeing the object photographed then any aesthetic interest taken in seeing the photograph as a photograph is an interest in seeing the photographed object" (Lopes 2003: 441–42), but he argues that this misconstrues transparency and he aims to show that a proper understanding of transparency can be the basis of aesthetic interest in photography. Lopes argues that "seeing an object through a photograph can arouse an interest not satisfied by seeing the same object face-to-face" (Lopes 2003: 442). On the one hand, seeing an object through a photograph makes it possible to see the object with greater clarity, accuracy and truthfulness than face-to-face seeing and, on the other hand, photographs can make it possible to see revelatory or unfamiliar features that we could not see face-to-face with the object. He claims that these two dimensions are the basis for a "documentary aesthetics" grounded in transparency (Lopes 2003: 445). However, Lopes's conclusion comes with a significant concession: he claims that both handmade pictures and photographs are capable of

being transparent pictures, so transparency offers no reason to think that photography offers a distinct kind of aesthetic experience (Lopes 2003: 446–47).

David Davies claims that an important aspect of Scruton's skeptical argument is not addressed by Lopes's analysis. He argues that it is not enough to establish that "seeing a subject through a photograph" differs from seeing the objects face-to-face. Scruton's argument requires that it must be possible to take an interest in both "the thought expressed about the subject" and the "manner in which this thought-content has been expressed through the manipulation of the medium" (Davies 2009: 348) in such a way that it is possible to recognize the artist's intentions correctly. Thus the challenge is to "explain how the photographer can embody in her photograph not only her way of viewing the subject, but *that* this is her way of viewing of the subject" (Davies 2009: 350). Davies uses ideas from Rudolf Arnheim and Henri Cartier-Bresson to construct a response. Nonetheless, against these and other critical replies, Scruton has recently reaffirmed his original view that representational art, properly understood, sets a demanding standard that photography is unable to meet (Scruton 2009).

Although few philosophers endorse Scruton's full-blooded denial of the possibility of photographic depiction, many have conceded that photography is inherently limited as a representational art form (e.g. Jones 1985: 374–75). Photographs, it is argued, are fictionally incompetent because they are incapable of depicting unreal, or imaginary, subject matter – or can merely achieve this through derivative means. Gregory Currie says he will argue that photographs "are capable of representing unreal things" (Currie 2008: 266), but in fact he argues that photographs are only capable of representing unreal subject matter by "use," in the same way that a pepper pot can "represent-by-use" the position of a general in a battle. Currie denies that a photograph has the capacity to represent anything unreal by virtue of the process that went into its making. The process of producing a photograph means that it may only "represent-by-origin" the photographed source, determined by a causal relationship. By contrast a painting can represent-by-origin anything imagined by the painter. This illustrates how the argument for a difference in kind between photographs and paintings can lead to the conclusion that photographs are an inferior species of picture. The idea that a photograph has the power to represent the real world is put in a zero-sum opposition with its power to represent anything unreal. Notably, Currie's conclusion fails to advance beyond Scruton's skeptical position, as Scruton is equally willing to accept that a photograph can represent only by use (Scruton 1981: 597).

In fact, the seemingly plausible idea that photographs are always representational in a minimal sense is precisely what stacks the deck against accepting photography as representational in any interesting sense. A minimal position takes for granted that any photograph is a representation insofar as it is guaranteed to have a representational subject. The subject of a photograph, it is supposed, is the photographed object – or whatever objects were in front of the camera when light from the scene was recorded. But we should be wary of a guarantee that seems unusually and implausibly strong. For example, Currie claims that a photograph acquires its representational subject just in virtue of its causal relation to the photographed objects, but this leads him to exclude the possibility that a photograph can have

anything other than the photographed objects as its photographically represented subject. He states that:

> Photographs are devices for producing representations by registering the presence of something – the source – that stands before the lens. That is the photographic means by which representation is achieved. A representation is photographic when it represents by photographic means, and such means confine us to the representation of the source … The limit of photographic representation is what is in front of the camera.
>
> (Currie 2008: 268–69)

A move of this kind opens the door for skepticism in the forms described above. However, resisting this move can be achieved by denying that the photographed objects are necessarily the "subject" of a photograph. As noted above, Maynard has argued that "what was photographed needs to be kept separate from what is thereby depicted" (Maynard 1997: 231); I have argued that photographs do not have a representational subject merely in virtue of having a causal relation to an object (Phillips 2009a); and Peter Alward supports a distinction "between what might be called the pictorial object and the pictorial subject, that is, what a picture is of and what it is about" (Alward 2012: 13). It follows from taking this stand that one must reject the idea that every photograph is necessarily a representation, but this is not to deny that photographs are capable of being representations. Instead it leaves open the fresh possibility of explaining how some photographs are given a representational subject through the manner of their production. Paloma Atencia-Linares (2012) has argued that revising our understanding of the photographic means of production makes it possible to show that photographs are capable of depicting fictional entities.

Skepticism and the mind-independence of photographs

Scruton's skepticism hinges on his view that photography is not a medium that permits an artist to express thoughts about a representational subject. However, skepticism about the aesthetic or artistic potential of photography does not solely rest on the question of whether a photograph can bear propositional content and whether it can be a representational art form. There are wider concerns raised by the general idea that photographs are inherently mind-independent. In the philosophy of art, the role of an artist's intentionality or agency plays a central role in discussions of the production and appreciation of art. Unlike pictures created through an agent-centered process of drawing or painting, photographs are products of a mechanical or otherwise automatic process that uses the causal action of light to register the appearance of objects without dependence on human intentional states of mind. The automatism of photography raises a host of problems which bring the artistic status of photographs into question. Difficulty arises when we seek a philosophical basis to establish whether a particular photograph counts as art, whether the photograph can rightly be attributed to a particular artist, whether it is possible to offer a correct interpretation of the work and whether there is reason to think that the creativity of the artist can be valued or admired.

Several of these problems are brought together in sharp focus by a device that recurs with frequency in philosophical debates about photography. It is *in principle possible*, this suggestion would have it, that the particular photograph that is being considered as a candidate for art status, for attribution to an author, for interpretation or for evaluation could equally have been produced by an accidental or erroneous operation of the camera mechanism and nonetheless exhibit the same properties as the image under consideration. This thought experiment can afford to stipulate an otherwise implausible sequence of events: the photographer falls asleep just as a squirrel falls out of the tree and triggers the shutter release, and so on. The point is that it creates pressure to concede that every photograph that is the product of artistic agency could in principle have an accidental yet indistinguishable counterpart which is not the product of artistic agency. By comparison, a parallel thought experiment, which results in the accidental counterpart for a painting, is easier to reject because, arguably, there can be no such thing as an accidental painting (Currie 1999: 287). A contrast of this kind is presented by Currie:

> Paint distributed on a canvas in such a way as to resemble Durham Cathedral but caused by accidental spillage rather than by an intending agent is a fool's painting, and depicts nothing … There can be an accidental photograph, as when the mechanism is unintentionally pressed, or connected to a trip-wire with no notion of when and by what it will be triggered. In such a case we end up with an image – a representation – of something no one planned to represent.
>
> (Currie 2008: 267)

In philosophical discussions of art, whenever the idea that photography is a mind-independent process is used to distinguish photographs from other kinds of image, it more often than not leads to treating photography as the inferior party. The power of arguments that appeal to an accidental counterpart, or that otherwise categorically divorce the photographer from the photograph, stems from willingness to believe that photographs are products of a process that is in essential respects mind-independent. Several philosophers have pointed out that the prevailing "folk psychology" of photography is as important as the facts about photography, perhaps even more so. Meskin and Cohen, Barbara Savedoff and others have claimed that the epistemic or aesthetic power of photographs are better explained in terms of properties that photographs are widely believed to possess, rather than properties that they actually possess (Savedoff 2000; Meskin and Cohen 2008: 76).

For example, Nigel Warburton argues that in the artworld it is a matter of convention that a print of a photograph needs to be personally certified by the artist if it is to count as an authentic artwork:

> Even if two prints were virtually (or even *actually*) indistinguishable only the one certified by the author would count as genuine or authentic … Only by means of such quality control can we be absolutely certain that a particular print fully embodies the photographer's intentions … The act of conferring status upon a print is one of the ways in which photographers overcome the

> expressive limitations of a process that is largely automated … Uncertified prints … can never be reliable indicators of a photographer's intentions, or at least cannot be *known* to be reliable indicators.
>
> (Warburton 1997: 134–35)

Warburton's analysis indicates that this existing convention stems from the view that it is necessary for artists to compensate for inherent limitations in the photographic process. It seems that a print which lacks supplementary artistic activity, in the form of some kind of certification, cannot grant reliable access to the artist's intentions for the purposes of authorial attribution, interpretation or evaluation. We might say that only certification can assure us that we are looking at the authentic artwork rather than an accidental counterpart.

The notion of an accidental counterpart can be rendered harmless by developing a more substantive conception of the production of photographs – one which makes the full causal history of production relevant to a comparison between two otherwise similar images. Doing so shows up the difference between cases where the photographer plays a salient role in the "photographic event" that defines the causal history of a photograph and cases where a photographer plays no role in this event. This approach makes it possible to reject the principle that mind-independence is a defining feature of all photographs (Phillips 2009b) and provides an opportunity to resist many of the skeptical anxieties about photographic art.

Unlike those who view mind-independence as an obstacle to photographic art, Savedoff is committed to the view that belief in the mind-independence of photographs explains the "documentary authority" of photographs that is responsible for their distinctive aesthetic power: our belief that photographs are documents of the real world and our belief that they accurately duplicate the appearance of objects in the real world are essential for photographs to transform our vision of reality (Savedoff 2000: 87–92). This intertwined pair of beliefs is recognizable as the notion of "realism" mentioned earlier in this discussion; however, Savedoff has expressed concern that widespread loss of belief in the mind-independence of photographs may begin to spread because manipulated digital images, which lack documentary authority, can appear indistinguishable from actual photographs (Savedoff 2000: 185–209). Perhaps Savedoff should not be concerned. Lopes targets the two beliefs highlighted in Savedoff's account as beliefs that may turn out to be inconsistent with the true nature of photography (Lopes 2008). This is significant because Lopes presents a principle for appreciation which, applied to photography, delivers a surprising conclusion: to date, appreciators of photographs may have been basing their judgments on inadequate appreciation of photographs. If so, it seems possible that rather than presenting a threat to the aesthetics of photography, a change of belief may be necessary for the proper appreciation of photographs.

The art of photographic portraiture

Portraiture is only one of the examples discussed in the philosophical literature, but it has given rise to some of the most interesting and illuminating discussions.

Scruton claims that "portraiture is not an art of the momentary, and its aim is not merely to capture fleeting appearances"; however, "if photography is understood in terms of a causal relation to its subject, it is thought of as revealing something momentary about its subject – how the subject looked at a particular moment" (Scruton 1981: 586–87). Scruton's skeptical argument, already discussed, makes it inevitable that he will reject the possibility of photographic portraiture, but the point he raises here is still relevant for positions that defend photographic portraits as representational art (see Freeland 2007; Maynard 2007). The problem is not simply the familiar idea that a photograph can only represent the photographed object; after all, in portraiture it is desirable that the subject of the work be the sitter. Instead the temporal dimension of photography raises a specific new problem: the frozen image of a face at a moment in time is likely to be an inadequate portrayal of a person's expressions or character because, as Arthur Danto notes, "we cannot see with the speed of the camera and what the camera accordingly shows may not be the way we look, where 'looks' are indexed to what is available to the unaided eye" (Danto 2008: 293). Accordingly, Danto argues that some photographic portraits are moral violations of the subject's "right to control representations of oneself" because the appearance made possible with the camera and imposed by the photographer may not be one that the subject would willingly endorse. By contrast with the "stills" of this style, he claims that photographers may instead choose to produce photographs in the style of "natural drawings" which take into account the expectations of the subject based on normal perception and require a negotiation between the photographer and the subject.

Richard Shusterman argues that the relationship between photographer and subject is in its own right the locus for aesthetic experience. By illuminating the significance of the performative process of posing for the photograph as a "soma-aesthetic" experience involving photographer and subject, Shusterman demonstrates the important truth that "there is more to photography than the photograph" (Shusterman 2012: 68). In my own study of self-portraits by photographers (Wilson 2012), I have argued that the automatism of photography makes it possible for artists to pose for self-portraits in ways that are unique in the history of the depictive arts – but these artworks can properly be understood only if we are willing to recognize that the photographer's perspective is central to the production of the image. All of these responses to the problem of portraiture share in common a clear sense that the production of a portrait ineliminably involves a relationship between the subject and the photographer, not just the subject and the camera. There may be a lesson here for all philosophy of photography.

See also Formalism (Chapter 9), Benjamin (Chapter 15), Postmodernism (Chapter 17), Fiction (Chapter 32), Depiction (Chapter 35), Style (Chapter 43), Film (Chapter 53).

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57
PAINTING

Dominic McIver Lopes

Suppose that, due to an episode of virulent iconoclasm, every painting, print and drawing were destroyed. Will we have lost something whose value nothing can replace? The answer is hardly obvious. We value paintings because they describe scenes, delight the senses, express emotions and communicate ideas, but we may value a work of film, dance, music or poetry for all the same reasons. Indeed, a film may describe a scene better than any painting, an aria express emotions more powerfully, a dance delight the senses more exquisitely, or a poem convey ideas more clearly. This suggests that if painting is to have a value, or values, of its own, then it must do at least some of these things in a distinctive manner. So, what is painting's distinctive character? An answer to this question is necessary if we also want to know what particular value or values accrue to paintings.

Before looking at some answers to these questions, a word about what counts as a painting. A painting is any picture whose surface is made up of a pattern of marks entirely and purposively inscribed by movements of the painter's body. This stipulative definition is somewhat unconventional because it includes drawing and much printmaking, and it is not completely informative, as it takes for granted that we know what a picture is (and thus why handwriting is not necessarily painting). Yet it is a useful definition because it leaves out photographs and because it makes room for abstract paintings that contain no recognizable images. Incidentally, few definitions are perfect and this one is vague enough to permit some borderline cases, such as Damien Hirst's spin paintings – random splatters that are made by spinning a disk, not inscribed purposively. As a final note, the definition does not ask us to assume that all paintings are works of art. The practice of art painting does not own a monopoly on painterly value, even if it may lay claim to its most spectacular examples.

The mimetic account

Many paintings appeal to us because they enable us to see things in them that we would have an interest in seeing face-to-face. This is due to a special feature of representational pictures: when one looks at a painting of a landscape, and understands it correctly, it is as if one is looking at the landscape. So, if the landscape is worth looking at, then so is the painting of it. One might think that this fact sets painting

apart and is the source of its particular value. Whereas a poem may represent things we would delight in seeing, only paintings furnish us with a source of the same kind of delight as the scenes they represent, because only they enable us to see those scenes in them.

According to the mimetic account, the value of a painting derives from what it represents. Let us call the real-world things a painting represents its "subject." The subject of Picasso's painting entitled *Gertrude Stein* is Gertrude Stein, the American modernist writer. A painting's subject should be distinguished from its content: how it represents the world as being. To begin with, a painting of a fictional scene has no subject, but it represents nevertheless. More importantly, the distinction allows us to take account of the phenomenon of representation-as. The properties a painting attributes to its subject, if it has one, need not be ones its subject actually has. A portrait of Stein might accurately represent her as stern and stout or it may inaccurately represent her as timid and delicate. In short, pictures with different contents may represent the same subject.

The distinction between subject and content is crucial to the mimetic account, which asserts not that a painting is worth looking at when its subject is worth looking at, but rather when its subject, as it is *represented*, is worth looking at. Paintings may, and frequently do, improve on reality, or direct our attention to overlooked aspects of the world, showing that they are worth looking at. This adds significantly to the appeal of the mimetic account, by explaining why we sometimes go to the trouble of making paintings of things we can look at face-to-face.

The mimetic account starts with the claim that a painting has a valuable property only if it represents something as having that property, but this cannot be the whole story. After all, a poem may also represent any object as having any property, simply by describing it as having the property; as we have already remarked, what is special about painting is the way its content enters into visual experience. When we look at a painting and understand it correctly, we typically have a visual experience whose content is determined by the content of the painting. Paintings not only represent objects but also elicit "object-presenting experiences." According to the mimetic account, then, a painting has a valuable property if and only if it elicits a visual experience as of something with that property.

Object-presenting experience is not a kind of illusion – not an experience we might mistake for an experience of seeing the object face-to-face. Rarely is seeing things in paintings exactly like seeing them face-to-face. The mimetic account requires not an illusionistic experience but merely experience *as of* what a painting represents. Looking at a cubist still life or a cartoon strip one still has an experience as of a bowl of fruit or Uncle Duke, though the experience is manifestly unlike any face-to-face experience of what is represented.

One might wonder how it is that paintings manage to elicit object-presenting experiences in the first place. To ask this is to seek a theory of pictorial representation, and there are several plausible candidates. One is the resemblance theory. Let us call the pattern of marks on a painting's surface its "design." According to the resemblance theory, a painting has a particular content only if its design looks the way its subject might look. The difficulty is that paintings' designs, being flat and static, rarely look *just* like real-world objects. We must specify which design–subject

resemblances are required, and this happens to be no easy task. Arguing that the task cannot be accomplished at all, some have proposed alternatives, and the debate among partisans has grown quite involved (Goodman 1976; Schier 1986; Walton 1990; Lopes 1996; Hopkins 1998; Kulvicki 2006; Newall 2011). Luckily, we need pursue the matter no further. The mimetic account of painting requires only that paintings do in fact evoke object-presenting experiences. Since any adequate theory of pictorial representation must explain this fact, the mimetic account need not choose among those theories.

Failure to register this point is one source of the mimetic account's unpopularity, since its principal defender, the eighteenth-century writer Gotthold Lessing, unnecessarily links it to the resemblance theory. In his *Laocoön*, Lessing argues that we value painting because "painting alone can represent material beauty" (Lessing 1962: §20). Moreover, material beauty is defined as the harmonious arrangement of the parts of an object in space. The reason that only paintings can represent the parts of things as harmoniously arranged is that only paintings are made up of spatially contiguous parts. But this assumes, erroneously, that only a contiguous spatial design can represent anything as having spatially contiguous parts. Lessing falls into this error because he is committed to the resemblance theory of pictorial representation. In other parts of the *Laocoön*, he observes that only pictures afford object-presenting experiences of beauty, and he should have claimed no more than this.

Setting Lessing's error aside, the mimetic account still faces formidable difficulties. Consider our admiration of paintings of scenes we would not admire. We normally feel revulsion at the sight of anything violent, horrible, pitiful or grotesque, so if paintings of such things have value, it is not because what they represent is admirable to see. While this is part of a larger puzzle about representations of tragic events in any of the arts, it is particularly troubling here, since the mimetic account locates the whole value of painting in its content.

Some early writers who have worried about how we can enjoy tragic dramas have suggested that our pleasure comes not only from the content of the drama but also from the fact that it is a representation (Aristotle 1987). Likewise, one might think that paintings are valuable not only because they depict things worth looking at but also just because they can successfully represent things (Hutcheson 1973: §4). There is something to this. We do sometimes delight in the mere fact that a flat surface before us cleverly imitates a scene, evoking an object-presenting experience of the scene, and this delight is at least sometimes independent of the painting's content. Some of the most charming *trompe l'œil* images represent the most banal subjects. Perhaps in paintings of unpleasant scenes this charm outweighs any unpleasantness. But although this suggestion may contain a grain of truth and may conceivably help solve the problem of tragedy, it has never been presented in enough detail to be evaluated properly. Moreover, it is doubtful that the suggestion could survive our recognition that we value paintings even when they represent their subjects clumsily. At any rate, additional difficulties face even the amended version of the mimetic account.

One concerns the nature of the object-presenting experiences elicited by paintings. We also have object-presenting experiences of dramatic characters when watching plays, and we see things in figurative sculptures. Presumably, each of these involves a

different kind of object-presenting experience, but how are we to characterize the difference? We might say that an experience of a painting differs from that of a sculpture because of its design features (for example it is flat). However, the mimetic account excludes this response, by locating what is distinctive of painting in our experience of its content, not our experience of its design.

More seriously, the mimetic account neglects the undeniable appeal of many paintings' designs apart from their contents: consider the jeweled surfaces of Byzantine mosaics. It also overlooks the contribution made by our awareness of the painter's touch, as in van Gogh's paintings – and it was this that distinguished painting from photography. Finally, to come to the obvious, the mimetic account has nothing to say about abstract painting.

Formalism

Formalism was backed in the early twentieth century by the art critics Clive Bell (1914) and Roger Fry (1927) partly as a way to accommodate the vogue for abstraction. Bell and Fry distinguish a painting's "plastic form" from its "illustrative content." The former comprises in the first instance the lines, shapes and colors (and the relations between them) of its design. For most formalists, plastic form also comprises the three-dimensional shapes and planes represented in a painting (and relations among them). Thus plastic form traverses the design–content distinction drawn above. Form is to be distinguished from a portion of a painting's content: what scenes and actions it represents, what they allude to or express, and what, if any, larger ideas are communicated. It is not misleading to think of this "illustrative" content as just what is left out of abstract painting.

The formal properties of painting are, if described in the right way, distinctive of painting. The lines and colors and textures (and relations among them) that comprise the picture surface are, after all, the visible traces of the painter's movements. It is these that distinguish painting from its sister art of photography; it is by means of them that we can tell photographs from paintings. Thus while every art form has formal properties, the value of painting lies in its distinctively painterly formal properties. Formalism answers the first question we must ask of an aesthetics of painting.

However, it is less clear how value accrues to painting in virtue of its form. According to Bell, a painting's plastic form has value when it is "significant," causing viewers to experience an "aesthetic emotion" (Bell 1914). Since, as Bell admits, the nature of this aesthetic emotion is a mystery, it is hard to see what evidence might be marshaled in favor of its being caused by formal properties. Nevertheless we may set this worry aside, for whether the value of painting lies in its capacity to cause an aesthetic emotion or in something else entirely, there are difficulties with the claim that painting can be appreciated, or appreciated fully, only through its plastic form.

Here we may distinguish between strong and weak versions of formalism. According to Bell's brand of formalism, the illustrative content of a painting is irrelevant to its value as a painting. According to a weaker formalism favored by Fry, there are two arts of painting, that of illustration and that of plastic form, each

having a separate value (Fry 1927). Since strong formalism is tenable only if weak formalism is tenable, we may concentrate on the latter. Three main reasons have been given in its support. First, plastic form and illustrative content may vary independently of one another, so that one form can illustrate many things or many forms illustrate one thing. Second, we can experience what a painting represents or its formal properties, but not both at once. To experience both we must "constantly shift attention backwards and forwards from one to the other" (ibid.: 23). Finally, the aims of illustration and formal design are different and competing.

The first two reasons must be taken in conjunction with the third. Neither the claim that form and illustrative content may vary independently, nor the claim that they cannot be perceived simultaneously, shows that their values are independent, unless these claims are taken together with the claim that the two arts have separate aims. This claim is overstated. While it is true that one aim may be pursued to the neglect of the other, it is an abiding aim of painters to achieve a coherence of form and illustrative content, in which recognition of the content stabilizes and amplifies the composition, and in which the composition clarifies and adds expressive force to what is represented. There is as much reason to think this coherence a particular value at which some painting aims as there is to think formal properties have independent value. Some paintings are appreciated only insofar as they achieve such a coherence. Moreover, seeing every form may require seeing what is illustrated. One may have to recognize the depicted gestures and movements of a group of figures in order to see their formal composition. A person suffering from a kind of visual agnosia depriving him of the ability to recognize objects but leaving intact the ability to see colors, lines and shapes, could not see all the formal properties of some paintings.

Double-aspect accounts

Rejecting the formalist claim that the arts of plastic form and illustration inevitably conflict gives us no reason to reject Fry's assertion that we can experience a painting's form or its illustrative content but not both at once, and this hints at a third approach to the aesthetics of painting. Experiences of paintings have two aspects: we experience a painting's design and we experience what it represents. Perhaps where we have gone wrong so far is in focusing on one aspect at the expense of the other: design (plus selected elements of content) in the case of formalism, and object-presenting experience in the mimetic account. The middle path is to locate the distinctiveness and value of painting in our experience of the relationship between both aspects. This relationship can be understood in two ways.

Parallelism

The first is that endorsed by Fry (substituting "design" for "form"), though its chief proponent is the art historian E. H. Gombrich (1969). On this view, which may be called "parallelism," it is possible to experience a painting's design (its flat surface composed of brushstrokes, marks and lines) or its content (the three-dimensional scene it represents) but never both at one and the same time. This is analogous to

the way we can see a duck or a rabbit consecutively in the famous drawing. What is characteristic of painting, according to parallelism, is that that experience of the design precludes an object-presenting experience, and vice versa.

Unlike Fry, Gombrich does not hold that painting's value lies in each aspect individually; rather, it may lie in what can be gained by switching between aspects. Gombrich is not very clear about what this value might be, but two possibilities come easily to mind. First, the value of painting may be the sum of the value of each aspect: the value of the formal properties of its design plus the value of seeing its content. Second, each aspect may enhance the other in an organic whole. The value of the object-presenting experience is sometimes amplified by seeing that it is caused by a designed surface – we see how good the trick is – and the value of the design is sometimes amplified by seeing how it sustains an object-presenting experience.

The objection to parallelism is that it entails that object-presenting experience is illusionistic: it is experience of a kind the object itself might cause. According to parallelism, awareness of a designed surface is no part of the object-presenting experience a painting elicits. But this awareness is just what alerts us to the fact that we are looking at a painting of a scene rather than the scene itself. If parallelism is true, then it follows that when we attend to the represented scene, our experience is illusionistic: we have an experience of the scene like one the scene itself might cause. Attending to the representational aspect obscures awareness of just what would alert us to the fact that the aspect is, after all, just a representation. Except in rare cases, however, object-presenting experiences of paintings are not illusionistic. Looking at a drawing and seeing in it what it represents is not like seeing its subject face-to-face. The objection is not simply that looking at a painting does not cause illusionistic experience, for parallelism admits we experience paintings' designs. The objection is that experiences of paintings are not necessarily illusionistic *even insofar as we attend only to their contents.*

Twofoldness

The alternative is that the two aspects of painting are simultaneous aspects of the same experience. This kind of seeing is what Richard Wollheim calls "seeing-in" (Wollheim 1987, 1998). We sometimes see figures in clouds or water stains or ink blots, and when we do, our experience amalgamates features of the "design" with features of the presented object. Awareness of one does not annihilate awareness of the other; rather, the two aspects blend into one "twofold" experience.

Unlike parallelism, this account does not construe object-presenting experience as illusionistic. Seeing a rabbit in a painting is not like looking at a rabbit face-to-face, for it is shot through with awareness of the design. Some have pointed out that this extends painting's content in what has come to be called "inflection" (Podro 1998; Lopes 2005; Hopkins 2010; Nanay 2010). If recognizing an object in a painting is permeated by awareness of the design, so that the object need not look the way it might look when seen face-to-face, then the design may complicate and elaborate the recognition in new structures. The interplay of form and content in cubist paintings seems to work this way. At the same time (and contrary to formalism), awareness of content impacts awareness of design. In these cases, twofoldness is the source of a

particular value in painting. We may appreciate a painting's formal properties or properties of the scene it enables us to see, but we may also appreciate how the two interact in an experience, each one enriching and complicating the other.

An additional virtue of the account is that it copes in a natural way with abstraction. Abstract paintings typically consist of designs in which we may see three-dimensional spaces and sometimes movement as well. Experiencing both simultaneously makes us aware of the interaction between design space and represented space that appears to be what many abstract artists strive to achieve (Wollheim 1987).

But are experiences of paintings inevitably twofold? Wollheim argues that twofoldness is essential to our experience of art painting. The reason is that twofoldness is the best explanation of the constancy of object-presenting experiences (Wollheim 1980: 215–16). When a painting is viewed from an oblique angle, the shapes we see in it are not distorted, as the laws of optics predict. An image of a cube looks cubical even when viewed from an angle from which it projects an irregular shape on to the retina. It appears that the brain corrects for shape using information about the painting's orientation relative to the viewer. Thus what is seen in the painting depends upon the appearance of its designed surface. We must experience both simultaneously.

This argument is invalid for two reasons. That the brain uses information about the surfaces of paintings does not show that design information enters into *conscious* experience. The information may remain at the subpersonal level, where it allows the brain to correct for viewing position, but never entering awareness. Moreover, in some cases, such as *trompe l'oeil* ceiling painting, we cannot see the design at all. It is true that when not viewed from the expected viewpoint, these paintings do look distorted. But this shows only that design information is necessary for constancy, not that it is essential to object-presenting experience.

Illusionistic or *trompe l'oeil* paintings are one kind of counterexample to the twofoldness account, for their success generally depends on our not noticing their design properties, or not noticing them when we attend to what they represent. In another kind of counterexample, the representational aspect is suppressed or absent. For example, "minimalist" paintings which do not project movement or three-dimensional space may accurately be described as "pure design." Another kind of counterexample is a Jasper Johns-like painting of an array of numerals. Painted numerals are not represented numerals: they just are numerals. We no more see the numeral 2 in that numeral than we see Barack Obama's face in Barack Obama. Thus we may attend to the designs of these paintings and to what they are (numerals) but we cannot attend to what they represent, for there is nothing they represent.

Pluralism

The particular value or values that accrue to paintings are those that are realized by its distinctive character. However, it appears that painting does not have a single, uniform character. The value of some paintings lies in their formal features – their designs and their nonillustrative content. Many paintings are valuable just for the object-presenting experiences they provide. In other cases, how a painting makes a scene visible to us through its design is the source of its value. No theory works for

all pictures. Mimeticism cannot cope with abstraction, paintings whose designed surfaces we admire, or, perhaps, paintings of disturbing scenes. Formalism leaves out paintings which strive for a unity of plastic form and illustrative content. Parallelism reckons only with illusionistic painting, while twofoldness overlooks illusionism, some abstraction and some representational painting. A person who sets out to mark up a surface through movements of her body may select from a family of tools for realizing value from what she does.

Putting the point somewhat differently, there are at least four broad genres of painting, each centering on a different fundamental element of painting. There are mimetic paintings, formalist paintings, parallel-aspect paintings and twofold paintings. If this is correct, then it follows that we can properly judge a painting's value only when we interpret it as falling within the appropriate genre (Walton 1970). We miss as much judging a cubist work by mimetic criteria or a *trompe l'oeil* painting by formalist criteria as we miss by judging hip-hop as jazz or reality TV as tragedy.

Not all the values of a painting are values that it realizes as a member of one of these genres. A painting may be valuable simply because it is very old, or because it was owned by a famous person, or because it is a memento of an important event. However, these values are significantly different from the values that a painting has *as a painting*. They feed into explanations and interpretations of paintings and acts of making them. The fact that someone wished to remember a trip to Japan may explain the presence of an ink-brush painting in their house, but what explains how that painting was marked up as a surface by the movements of its maker is that it perfectly expresses the spirit and cultural significance of the *koi*. The values of painting as paintings play a privileged role in our understanding of paintings.

Obviously, paintings may have great aesthetic value: beauty is one aesthetic value and some of the most beautiful things in the world are paintings. These include beautiful paintings of beautiful things, beautiful formal arrangements and beautiful interplays between the two. It should also be clear that paintings realize many other kinds of value using the same tool kit of resources. Among these, cognitive values are especially interesting. Thus paintings may guide action in effective ways by reducing complex sequences into chunks that, when imitated, determine a whole action (Gombrich 1990; Lopes 2004). Sometimes, one may exploit the design in parallel to content to facilitate action, as when Mercator projection maps are used in rhumb-line navigation: straight lines on these maps represent constant bearings (Lopes 2004). To move onto a less prosaic example, paintings can represent expressive faces and these paintings' formal features can also be powerfully expressive. Some have argued that in painting the two may be combined: a painting may show both how an emotion looks (by showing a face smiling) and how the same emotion feels by using a palette dominated by yellows (Green 2007). This explains the power of paintings to sharpen the human capacity to respond to others with empathy (Lopes 2011).

Paintings describe scenes, delight the senses, express emotions, communicate ideas, and allude either to other artworks or to common experience. There is no single reason for which we value all paintings and only paintings. A reason to value one painting may not be a reason to value all, and it may be a reason to value something

that is not a painting at all. This need not disappoint us. An outbreak of iconoclasm would deprive us not of something of unique value but of many things with a variety of values.

See also Aristotle (Chapter 2), Formalism (Chapter 9), Goodman (Chapter 18), Depiction (Chapter 35), Fakes and forgeries (Chapter 45), Comics (Chapter 55), Photography (Chapter 56), Sculpture (Chapter 58).

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58
SCULPTURE

Sherri Irvin

Sculpture has received comparatively little attention from philosophers of art. However, sculpture, in its classical and contemporary forms, raises distinctive questions about the ontology, representational character and appreciation of art, and is thus well worth attending to.

Defining sculpture

Before the turn of the twentieth century, nearly all sculptures in the Western fine art tradition were three-dimensional representations of recognizable objects, most often human figures. Most sculptures were free-standing objects, though bas-relief sculpture on buildings and altarpieces also constituted a notable form. Sculptures were typically static objects made of durable materials such as stone, bronze, clay and wood.

But over the past century, the range of sculptural materials, subject matters and practices has exploded. Many sculptures, such as the abstract works of Barbara Hepworth or Louise Nevelson, are not obviously representations of objects, even imaginary ones. Kinetic sculptures, unlike their static predecessors, involve movement and, sometimes, sound elements. Installation artworks frequently involve an immersive environment that we explore by moving through it, rather than an object that we view by circling it; and they may incorporate multimedia elements such as film and video. Earthworks involve interventions, sometimes on a very large scale, in exterior landscapes. I include all of these developments within the category of sculpture, since they are outgrowths of earlier sculptural traditions and practices. At the same time, we should maintain the traditional divisions separating sculpture from painting and architecture, as well as distinguish sculpture from performance art, which raises interesting but distinct issues. Sculptures must also be distinguished from three-dimensional nonart objects, no small feat now that artists have begun to incorporate a wide array of artifacts into their work. Sometimes a snow shovel is just a snow shovel; other times it is Marcel Duchamp's (1915) *In Advance of the Broken Arm*.

A simple, neat definition of sculpture is thus precluded by the great diversity of sculptural works and by the complex contours of the boundaries that distinguish sculpture from other domains, which are the product more of historical traditions and practices than of rational calculation. Moreover, there is no defining sculpture

without having already made some decisions about what to include, as indicated above. And once those decisions have been made, much inquiry about sculpture could proceed – and has proceeded – by looking at a variety of cases without trying to unify them under a definition.

An attempt at definition might, nonetheless, be helpful in allowing us to see where philosophical inquiry is most needed. So let's begin here: sculpture is the art form consisting of the articulation or presentation of objects geared centrally toward appreciation in three spatial dimensions (and possibly the temporal dimension), excluding substantially constructed buildings and works involving the living human body.

In claiming that sculptures are "geared toward" rather than "intended for" appreciation, the definition remains neutral about whether the artist's intentions or other factors, such as audience reception or artistic convention, determine the aims or functions of an artwork. An account of what determines the artwork's aims would be needed to flesh out the definition.

The definition expressly includes sculptural works with a temporal component, such as those with kinetic or time-based media elements. It also nods to the fact that our appreciation even of static sculpture is typically temporal in a special way, involving our movement around or through the sculpture as we gain access to features that are not available, even in principle, to a momentary glance. (See Martin 1981: ch. 2.) It distinguishes sculpture from painting by invoking appreciation in three spatial dimensions; while paintings are three-dimensional objects, in standard cases appreciation focuses on their (approximately) two-dimensional surfaces. The definition roughly separates sculpture from three-dimensional arts such as furniture and pottery by stipulating that sculpture is geared centrally toward *appreciation*, as opposed to functions such as supporting the human body or containing other materials. This division is somewhat porous, as it must be. It allows that pottery and furniture geared centrally toward appreciation, rather than or in addition to use, will count as sculpture. The definition roughly distinguishes sculpture from architecture by ruling out substantially constructed buildings, leaving open the possibility that some works of architecture that are not substantially constructed buildings may occupy the boundary between the two categories.

The distinctions between sculpture and other sorts of three-dimensional artifact might be firmed up by offering an account of the specific sort of appreciation that is appropriate to sculpture. As discussed below, such accounts, which are often especially concerned with the distinction between painting and sculpture, tend to appeal to the role of touch and bodily or spatial awareness in the appreciation of sculpture. In order to distinguish sculpture in the appropriate ways from furniture, jewelry, couture and pottery, these accounts would need to be supplemented with an understanding of the role of critical engagement in the appreciation of sculpture as art: we appreciate sculptures not just by considering their effects on our physical or spatial awareness, but also by considering them in light of specific artistic, art-theoretic and art-historical traditions. To appreciate a sculpture as art, then, is to engage with it critically in light of these traditions even while experiencing its bodily or spatial effects.

A final note is that our definition leaves open the possibility that Duchamp's *In Advance of the Broken Arm* is not, in fact, a sculpture. If the work does not have appreciation in three dimensions among its central aims – if, instead, its central aim

is to prompt reflection on the boundaries of art, or to emphasize the artist's audacious gesture in presenting a purchase from the hardware store as an artwork – then it may not be a sculpture, despite involving a three-dimensional object. This does not rule out its belonging to another art form, such as conceptual art.

Sculptural content

Much of the recent philosophical literature about sculpture concerns the nature of sculptural representation. Intuitively, representation in the visual arts has something to do with resemblance: a painting or sculpture looks like the object that it represents. Clearly, though, this notion must be qualified, for the differences between an artwork and the object it represents may be, from some perspectives, far more salient than the similarities. A sculpture may be cold, hard, monochrome and static, while the person it portrays is warm, soft, multicolored and mobile. Richard Wollheim (1968, 1987), speaking chiefly of painting, refers to this phenomenon as "twofoldness": we see both the artwork with its particular material features, and the object represented by way of those features, which we understand as having a distinct set of characteristics. In Wollheim's terms, appreciation of an artwork involves seeing-in: we see the person in the painting, while recognizing that many features of the painting are not to be attributed to the person.

Robert Hopkins (2003) suggests that Wollheim's view, in its broad outlines, is as plausible for sculpture as for painting. But seeing-in must function differently for sculpture than for painting: in standard sculptural cases, it will not involve ascertaining a three-dimensional object based on marks on a two-dimensional surface. However, we should not conclude that the sculpture simply represents an object that shares its three-dimensional form (perhaps adjusted for scale). As Hopkins (1994) notes, particular objects can be *mis*represented in sculpture: a sculpture may present a caricature of a person, or may present some of her features erroneously, while still representing her. The sculptural form may be abstract enough that its material features don't resemble those of its subject to the exclusion of every other person. Moreover, it may possess stylistic elements (such as a rough surface) that we clearly are not meant to attribute to the person. There may, then, be significant discrepancies between the form of the sculpture and the form of the subject it represents. Hopkins (1994) argues that the sculpture ultimately represents the subject that it is *taken to represent* within an appropriate appreciative experience, where this will be determined not just by isomorphism of shape, but also by other factors such as the manner of presentation of the sculpture (including the work's title), and the viewer's knowledge of conventions of representing the subject (e.g. the knowledge that George W. Bush is frequently caricatured as having very large ears). Our perceptual and cognitive processes in responding to the sculpture, then, lead to the sculpture's being phenomenally experienced as resembling a particular subject. This phenomenal experience of resemblance determines what the sculpture represents.

Some writers have made claims about the content of sculpture more generally. Several (e.g. Herder 2002 [1778]; Martin 1981; Read 1956; Rogers 1984) have remarked on the special suitability of sculpture to depict human bodies. Martin

claims, moreover, that whatever particular sculptures may represent, "sculpture has a distinctive underlying, all-pervasive subject matter – the importance of being aware of our unity with things" (1981: 123). As these claims are related to matters of sculptural aesthetics and appreciation, they will be taken up in the following section.

An aspect of sculptural content that has been neglected, but is central to the appreciation of much modern and contemporary sculpture, pertains to the generation of meaning not just through resemblance-based representation but through incorporation or inclusion. Marcel Duchamp's (1913) *Bicycle Wheel* is a sculptural assemblage involving a bicycle wheel and fork mounted upside down on a wooden stool. Appreciation of the resulting object depends in part on the recognition of what may be called its "inclusion content": the fact that it incorporates a bicycle wheel and a stool, and that it positions them so as to render both of the incorporated objects inert relative to their usual functions. The fact that the objects are *actually* a bicycle wheel and a stool, not merely objects constructed to resemble them, contributes to the impact of the work. Representation may be one aspect of inclusion content: perhaps the bicycle wheel contributes content to the work partly by representing (or, in Nelson Goodman's terms, exemplifying; 1976) certain properties of bicycle wheels more generally. But this does not seem to exhaust the inclusion content that a ready-made object can bring to a sculptural work. Tracey Emin's (1998) *My Bed* is a presentation of Emin's bed and associated objects, including soiled sheets, rumpled pantyhose, used condoms and cigarette butts. While the meaning of the work may depend in part on these objects representing or symbolizing other things, it also seems to depend on very particular aspects of how these objects are arranged and how they are proposed as relating to each other in the context of Emin's life. There is thus no reason to assume that inclusion content can be reduced to representational content more generally.

Some works have both standard representational content and inclusion content. In Zhan Wang's *Urban Landscapes* of the 2000s, stainless-steel kitchen implements are assembled so as to represent cityscapes. These works have both representational content (the cityscape) and inclusion content (pots, pans, spoons, etc.). Appreciating the work involves recognizing both forms of content and grasping their interplay: for instance, the cleverness of representing traffic by using forks and spoons whose handles suggest a trail of motion in the vehicles' wake.

An artwork may also have inclusion content by nature of the substances it includes, even when these are not ready-made objects. Janine Antoni's (1992) *Gnaw* consists in part of a 600-pound cube of chocolate and a 600-pound cube of lard that the artist shaped by carving them with her mouth. These materials seem to signify in a way that, say, the stone of a traditional sculpture does not. Though it certainly matters aesthetically that Michelangelo's *Pietà* is made of marble, this choice of material does not seem to feed into our understanding of the subject matter: Mary and Jesus are not presented as hard or stony, as the magnificent drapery clearly attests. But with Antoni's work, the very nature of the materials contributes to our grasp of the work's themes of desire, excess and female body image. A work with a similar appearance but made of different materials would not express the same meanings in the same way.

Because modern and contemporary sculptures often have inclusion content that significantly affects their meanings, a philosophical account of inclusion content is needed to bring the literature on sculptural content up to date.

Appreciation of sculpture

A number of writers have attempted to characterize a distinct sculptural aesthetics, in contrast with the aesthetics of painting. While Adolf von Hildebrand (1907 [1893]) suggests that sculpture is distinctive in providing a series of two-dimensional visible silhouettes that are apprehended from various locations around the sculpture, most have thought that touch or bodily awareness plays a special role in the appreciation of sculpture. Herbert Read, offering an extreme version of such a view, claims that "[s]culpture is an art of *palpation* – an art that gives satisfaction in the touching and handling of objects" (1956: 49) and suggests that when we are unable to touch a sculpture our appreciation is impeded. Other writers, while acknowledging a special role for touch and related forms of bodily awareness in the appreciation of sculpture, allow that the activation of this awareness may occur by way of vision. Johann Gottfried Herder (2002 [1778]) suggests that we use vision as a substitute for touch in our apprehension of sculpture: the eye is guided to seek out the information that the hand desires. We are then able to reconstitute an understanding of the form as a whole by imaginatively synthesizing the data we have taken in through vision. (See Zuckert 2009 for detailed discussion.) Herder suggests that the beauty of three-dimensional forms, and the pleasure they occasion, belong to touch: the form is felt (perhaps imaginatively), not seen, as beautiful.

Some writers have objected to the suggestion that sculpture, in contrast to painting, is a distinctively tactile art. Rhys Carpenter (1960) rejects outright the claim that sculpture appeals to touch rather than to vision, regarding the matter as settled by the fact that sculptures are made chiefly to be looked at and not felt. Hopkins (2005: 576) notes that paintings, like sculptures, can stimulate tactile imaginings in their vivid presentation of textures. And Dominic McIver Lopes (1997, 2002) argues that, in principle, there could be tactile pictorial arts; it is merely a contingent fact that our painting tradition is directed toward vision rather than touch.

Several writers, though, have argued that sculpture has a distinctive effect on the perceiver's bodily awareness. Herder (2002 [1778]) claimed that we experience imaginative bodily identification with sculptures that depict human bodies, and that this allows us to grasp the sculpture's expressive content. Robert D. Vance suggests that such identification occurs even when the subject of the sculpture is nonhuman or abstract: "I identify with … the sculpture by imagining its apparent features as being experienced by myself," and then "imagining it as an extension of [my] own body" (1995: 225).

Vance's claim that we identify bodily with sculpture seems more plausible for some works than for others. While Meret Oppenheim's (1936) *Object*, a fur-covered cup, saucer and spoon, surely affects our bodily self-awareness, it seems to do so by provoking us to imagine what it would feel like to use the objects (and tempting us to touch them), rather than by causing us to experience them as parts or extensions of our bodies. Other accounts of sculpture's effect on bodily self-awareness have attempted to do without Vance's strong claim about identification with sculptures. F. David Martin (1981), offering a detailed account of the phenomenology of sculpture appreciation, argues that sculpture enlivens space, sending out forces that create urges in the viewer to respond with bodily movement. Though we perceive

sculptures visually, he suggests, "we invariably perceive the forces of a sculpture as if they were pressing on our bodies" (1981: 62). For this reason, "[o]ur body sensations are part of the unity of the aesthetic experience" of a sculpture (1981: 74). Because sculpture affects our bodies in this way, Martin suggests, it is unique among the arts in emphasizing our "physical or spatial withness" with things (1981: 134): whereas painting creates a pictorial space from which we are physically excluded, sculpture heightens our sense of sharing space with and being impinged on by other things. Martin claims that this is a therapeutic effect in the context of modern life, which often causes us to feel alienated and distanced from our actual physical environment.

Martin's view, like Vance's, seems better suited to some sculptures than to others. Not all sculpture obviously "'bangs' into our bodies with convergent forces" (Martin 1981: 169), even when we do feel inclined to move around it. Viewers move around Anish Kapoor's (2004–6) *Cloud Gate*, a large public sculpture in Chicago, to explore the varying ways its surface reflects their own bodies, rather than being moved around by forces the object projects into the surrounding space. It is also unclear that Martin can make good on his claim that sculpture invariably promotes our "withness with things." In his remarks about the representation of women in sculpture, he says, "Even the most perfect real woman – at least from a male chauvinist standpoint – is always moving away, or talking too much, or covering up, or in bad light, or sick, or getting old. The sculptor can make her stand still, shut her up, strip her, give her good light, and keep her young and healthy" (1981: 167). If a central function of some sculpture is to realize the sexist project of shutting women up, stripping them and forcing their bodies into ageless immobility, it is hard to see how this helps to secure the audience member's "withness" with real women or their bodies. More generally, the idealization of objects or the creation of immersive spaces through sculpture may, in some instances, distance us from the physical particularity of the world we live in rather than reconcile us to it.

Martin's remark calls to our attention the fact that sculpture, especially when it depicts the human figure, may appeal to us as specifically embodied and gendered beings: and part of its appeal to our bodily senses may be sexual. While most commentators have shied away from discussing the role of sexuality in aesthetic responses to art, and some have claimed that sexual and aesthetic responses are incompatible, Herder (2002 [1778]) acknowledges that sexual attraction can provide the impetus for careful aesthetic exploration of a sculpturally depicted human form, and holds that bodily responses are integral to rather than in tension with aesthetic ones. As Herder notes, and as remains true today, philosophers have tended to privilege vision as the "highest" of the senses and to downplay the importance of embodied experience, including sexuality. Rachel Zuckert (2009: 294) suggests that the intimate connection of sculpture to our embodied condition may explain the striking philosophical neglect of sculpture among the arts.

As we have seen, several theorists have proposed that sculpture has specific effects on the bodily awareness of the spectator, but each account has its limitations. A more promising contender is Susanne Langer's (1953) proposal that sculpture affects us by altering our experience of space. In general, Langer claims, we experience space as organized by our kinetic possibilities: the way in which we might choose to move through it. In the presence of a sculpture, we experience space as organized by

the kinetic possibilities we imagine for the sculpture – which, when the sculpture represents an identifiable object, are determined in part by the kinetic possibilities we understand that object to have.

As Hopkins (2003) notes, Langer's view may have its limits: it is hard to account for the impact of a portrait bust by appealing to its kinetic possibilities, which seem to be severely circumscribed. Nonetheless, Langer's view may be able to absorb many of the phenomena discussed by Herder, Vance and Martin, by suggesting that we identify bodily with sculpture, or experience its forces as physically impacting us, because it alters our felt relationship with the space that it and we jointly occupy.

Langer's account provides useful resources for seeing Duchamp's *In Advance of the Broken Arm* as operating sculpturally, not just conceptually. Our awareness of the snow shovel's kinetic possibilities, already activated by our knowledge of its ordinary use, is heightened by the title (which is also inscribed on the object). In addition, the shovel was originally hung from the ceiling by a wire, which introduces the possibility of a swinging motion, perhaps even caused by the viewer's body. It thus makes sense to think that our appreciation of the work involves a response to the shovel's kinetic possibilities as they interact with our own.

Sculpture and the ontology of art

While sculpture has been little discussed by philosophers of art, it has been a popular topic for philosophical metaphysicians. The traditional puzzle of the statue and the clay concerns how an artifact relates to the material out of which it is made. While we might intuitively think that a statue is identical to a particular hunk of clay, a problem arises because they have different persistence conditions: the hunk of clay may have existed before the statue was made and may persist after the statue is destroyed. Judith Jarvis Thomson (1998) and Lynne Rudder Baker (2000) argue, for related reasons, that the clay *constitutes* the statue rather than being identical with it. The statue inherits many of its aesthetic features from the way the clay is arranged, but the statue and the clay are nonetheless distinct entities.

The problem of the statue and the clay as it is typically understood is not specific to sculpture, but instead pertains to all artifacts (Thomson 1998: 157). A less frequently remarked puzzle, which arises specifically in artistic contexts, pertains to the *normative* aspects of the relationship between the sculpture and the material that constitutes it. Sculptures have correct configurations; typically a sculpture has a top and a bottom, and for sculptures that involve multiple objects there are typically norms for positioning those objects in relation to each other. For some works of sculpture, it is essential that a particular object be displayed. But for works such as the candy spills of Felix Gonzalez-Torres, which involve piles of wrapped candies that the audience is permitted to eat, all the objects on display are subject to removal and replacement. Between exhibitions, a museum may continue to own Gonzalez-Torres's work, but without maintaining any material component in storage (Irvin 2008). Other works seem to occupy an intermediate place on this spectrum: one cannot present just any snow shovel as Duchamp's *In Advance of the Broken Arm*, but Duchamp authorized reconstructions of the work after the original was lost.

These examples suggest that the view that the sculpture is constituted by one or more hunks of material is false in some instances (for Gonzalez-Torres's sculpture exists even at times when there is no material that could be thought to constitute it). And even where it is or may be true, it fails to explain crucial matters such as what the correct configuration of the constituting matter is and which material elements (if any) are replaceable. Because these matters are essential to a correct account of the nature of the work, the view of sculptures as constituted by physical material is ontologically inadequate (Irvin 2012).

I argue (2005, 2008) that a crucial aspect of what the artist does in creating the artwork, over and above selecting or fabricating an object, is to express a set of norms governing how that object is to be displayed and treated. These norms, far from being trivial background matters, are essential to the nature of the work and to how viewers are to understand it. In particular, they determine how the material stuff is implicated in the work: Is a particular component essential, or are all the work's components in principle replaceable? Can the work persist without any constituting physical material at all? Can the objects be displayed in different ways on different occasions? The norms expressed by the artist determine the answers to these questions.

For this reason, many sculptural works, like most musical works, are best understood as having a two-level ontology (Irvin 2013). The composer creates a musical work, which is a set of norms that musicians (perhaps including the composer) interpret to create particular performances. Similarly, the sculptural artist expresses a set of norms, which must be satisfied to create the display object viewers see on a particular occasion.

Questions about correct configuration and about the essential material features of the artwork can arise in relation to painting as well; norms play a crucial role in the ontology of all artworks (Irvin 2005). However, sculpture raises these matters with special acuteness, and new thinking about the ontology of visual artworks is likely to be driven in large part by sculptural examples.

Conclusion

I have confined my attention to matters relevant to all sculpture: the question of how sculpture may be defined, the nature of sculptural content, and the appreciation and ontology of sculpture. These do not exhaust sculptural trends and topics that merit philosophical attention. Much public art, especially in outdoor settings, is sculptural; sculpture thus supplies fertile ground for considering how art does and should (or should not) serve political ideologies and public needs. The way sculpture occupies space seems to give it special potential to shape the experience of those who interact with it; there may, then, be an ethics of sculpture that is distinct from the ethics of other art forms. Finally, much sculpture throughout history has been designed for specific environments, and relocation of the work may have more significant effects on the appreciation of sculpture than of painting. It is claimed of some contemporary sculptural works that they are site specific, and thus cannot be relocated without undermining their aesthetic effect or even destroying them. The

special relationship sculptures seem to have to their display environments, and the possibility that the site is sometimes integral to the ontology of a sculpture, warrant philosophical inquiry to match the extensive attention they have received from art critics and historians.

Philosophy often takes a while to catch up with its subject matter, and this is certainly true when it comes to art. As philosophy comes increasingly to accept and celebrate the relevance of embodied experience, and as aesthetics inches toward the twenty-first century, we can expect sculpture to occupy an increasingly central rather than marginal place in philosophical theorizing about art.

See also Goodman (Chapter 18), Ontology of art (Chapter 23), Depiction (Chapter 35), Painting (Chapter 57), Architecture (Chapter 60), Music (Chapter 61).

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59
DESIGN

Glenn Parsons

Today the designer is a cultural figure every bit as familiar as the artist. Designers such as Jonathan Ive and Phillipe Starck enjoy celebrity status on par with prominent artists such as Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin. But what is design? In its most basic sense, "designing" refers to an activity: creating a plan or blueprint for something novel that will perform a desired task (Bamford 1991). This activity, however, is by no means peculiar to the figures we call designers. Craftswomen design custom furniture, scientists design theories to explain natural phenomena, engineers design electrical systems and so on. What is distinctive of designers is not that they design, but the special context in which they do so. Unlike the scientist who designs explanatory theories, the designer concocts artifacts for practical use. Unlike the engineer, who typically designs internal systems, the designer focuses on features that users can perceive and control. And unlike the traditional craftsman (the cabinetmaker, for instance), designers design but do not manufacture their goods by their own hand. Unlike these other professionals, the designer is a distinctly modern figure, playing a specialized role in the modern industrial system of mass production. As these systems have produced an ever wider and more affordable array of consumer goods, with an ever greater significance for contemporary life, the cultural influence of the designer has increased.

Aesthetics, art and design

Although industrial design has now attained a cultural prominence at least comparable to that of art, Anglo-American philosophers have taken little interest in it. Their general attitude is exemplified nicely by a central text in the philosophical aesthetics of the last forty years, Arthur Danto's *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (1981). Danto casts the field's central question in the following way: How is it that certain artists, such as Duchamp, are able to transform "objects from the *Lebenswelt* of commonplace existence," a mundane urinal for instance, into works of art? In Danto's investigation, the vast array of "mere real things": urinals, desks, cars, watches, lamps – in fact, the entire manufactured material environment generated by design – recedes into a backdrop against which philosophical investigation of art takes place.

From one perspective, it is unremarkable that philosophers should focus attention on art: many artworks possess great aesthetic value and carry important cultural meaning. Furthermore, philosophers have been studying the kinds of works that we now classify as art (e.g. painting and music) since the time of Plato and Aristotle. From another perspective, however, the philosophical dichotomy of art and "mere real thing" looks outdated and unduly constraining.

For one thing, this dichotomy obscures a radical change in the nature of "mere real things" since the time of Plato and Aristotle, for contemporary everyday artifacts are the products of a particularly modern mode of production: design. In the last 250 years, industrial design has radically altered the material environment in which we live, which has, in turn, reshaped our lives. One aspect of this reshaping has been an increasing role for everyday material goods as objects of aesthetic appreciation. The cultural commentator Virginia Postrel recently claimed that we are now living in "the age of aesthetics," not because of our art, but rather because of our focus on the look of everyday consumer items (Postrel 2003). Another significant aspect of design's remaking of the material environment has been its influence on the meaning of everyday consumer goods. Danto's own account of art emphasized the importance of its special meaning. But as consumerism has become increasingly dominant, the products of design, too, have taken on complex and powerful meanings. In short, despite having largely remained in the background of philosophical aesthetics to date, design and its products seem a logical subject for philosophical analysis.

The modernist agenda

If professional philosophers have often been content to ignore design's radical transfiguration of commonplace goods, other theorists have not. The implications of the increasingly "designer-centered" systems of industrial mass production were brought out in a stark and provocative way by the modernist movement of the early twentieth century. Modernism manifested itself across a wide range of fields, including both industrial design and the fine arts. But the modernist impulse was not merely to "update" each of these areas; more fundamentally, modernism sought to break down the traditional distinctions between them to achieve a "decompartmentalization of human experience" (Greenhalgh 1990). Modernist ambitions for design, therefore, were no less lofty than those for art itself.

The roots of modernist thinking about design lay in the nineteenth-century impulse for social reform, itself a reaction to the social upheaval of the industrial revolution. In the nineteenth century, the reformist impulse was related to aesthetics by writers such as William Morris and John Ruskin in Britain, and Horatio Greenough in the USA. Perhaps the classic and most powerful example of this connection, however, is the polemical essay "Ornament and Crime" (1971 [1908]) by the Austrian architect Adolf Loos. Loos's essay attacked contemporary taste in consumer goods, which he viewed as beset by "the ornament disease." His attack was based on two ideas. The first was that the creative and aesthetic impulses that once found expression in the ornamentation of everyday things now had better outlets in the fine arts – as

he put it, humanity has now "outgrown ornament." The second idea was that, because of this fact, the continuing decoration of everyday objects was unnecessary and therefore "a crime against the national economy," given its waste of labor, time and expense. In a passage with a remarkably contemporary ring, Loos bemoaned the waste caused by fashion's constant adoption of ever new, but ultimately meaningless, ornamental styles.

Loos's essay connects issues of aesthetics with ethical and social issues in a characteristically "decompartmentalizing" modernist fashion. But it is important to note his insistence that the rejection of ornament is not merely a puritanical renunciation of pleasure. Rather, he believed that the modern man really preferred simple, undecorated forms on aesthetic grounds: "I am not denying myself!" he declared. Loos thus sees himself, not as urging a rejection of aesthetics, or as describing yet another style, but as presenting a philosophical discovery about the nature of true aesthetic value in consumer goods.

Loos's essay sketches a bold agenda that reappears, with various permutations, throughout modernist writings: to remake the realm of material goods, creating everyday objects that are not only useful and socially responsible, but also *truly beautiful*. A central idea in modernism was thus a deep commitment to the idea of *aesthetically good design*, as opposed to merely popular design. The modernist agenda raises philosophical questions about the nature of aesthetic value and its relation to utility, morals and meaning, as well as broader questions about the ethics of making and consuming material goods. Modernist theorists pursued these questions, not only in their writings, but also in their design practice, as in the Bauhaus school of Weimar Germany, where artists and craftsmen experimented with new forms for everyday objects.

A range of views resulted. Some thought the modern capitalist system of mass production to blame for social ills, and advocated a return to a more traditional and "authentic" craftsman mode of production. But others realized that, within this system, the designer's ability to create new forms for vast markets represented an unprecedented power for social reform. In this context, the designer took on the role of social visionary, a role more traditionally associated with the artist. Unlike the artist, however, the designer would not merely provide images of a blissful future; he or she would bring that future into material reality.

Postmodernist reaction

Under the influence of modernist ideas, and also as a result of new technologies and materials, consumer goods changed greatly in the early twentieth century as the simpler, unadorned forms favored by modernists came into vogue. But the utopian visions of modernist theory were only one force driving the development of design. An equally, if not more, important force was its commercial dimension. As theorists were writing their manifestos, corporations were busy hiring artists to run design departments and sell unfamiliar products to a skeptical public. Although "modern" forms had attained broad cultural appeal, the market continued to demand traditional ornamental styles as well. Under this commercial pressure, the cherished ideal

of "good design" could seem like an unreal abstraction: "Good design," went the quip, "is an upward sales curve." Further, high-profile efforts in architecture by leading modernist figures, such as Le Corbusier, came under criticism. Critics of modernism in architecture, such as Robert Venturi, now lamented, rather than celebrated, the "total control" of the designer (Venturi 1984).

The result of these developments was a reactionary "postmodern" theoretical position about design. Like modernism itself, postmodernism appeared in innumerable variations. A forceful account of the general position, however, can be found in Virginia Postrel's recent book *The Substance of Style* (2003). Postrel's book is particularly useful because it focuses on the broad range of consumer goods produced by industrial design, rather than only on architecture. Although not explicitly philosophical, her book offers a sustained and well-informed attempt to think through the aesthetics of contemporary design.

Postrel claims that ours is an age of "aesthetic pluralism" that "overthrows modernist ideology" (2003: 13). In opposition to Loos's idea that humanity has outgrown the need to ornament everyday artifacts, Postrel insists that the adornment of consumer goods is a natural and irresistible aesthetic impulse. And the aesthetic impulse, she insists, is subjective: the proper locution today is "'I like that' rather than 'this is good design'" (2003: 10). Modernism, despite its pretensions to discovering "true aesthetic value," was really only another style. We should treat designed items, she urges, like food, where "the diner, not the cook, is the ultimate arbiter of what works" (2003: 7). In Postrel's view, industrial design today enjoys a golden age, not because it produces "good designs," but because of its capacity to offer an enormous array of custom options, sure to please each and every taste.

Objects of desire

The modernist and postmodernist positions sketched above provide us with strikingly different views on the aesthetics of design. In evaluating the two positions, however, it is useful to focus on a commitment common to both: the idea that consumer goods possess aesthetic value. This commitment, however, faces an immediate problem given the special relationship that we have to the consumer goods produced by industrial design. Because they are typically utilitarian, they are things that we *desire*: we long to possess them. Further, consumer goods not only fulfill our wants and needs, they also aim to stimulate and create new ones. As the design historian Adrian Forty has nicely put it, consumer goods are "objects of desire" (1986).

In this respect, consumer goods come into conflict with a prominent philosophical tradition which goes back to the work of the eighteenth-century British philosopher Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury. In his dialogue *The Moralists* (1999 [1711]), Shaftesbury argues that a true appreciation of beauty is free from self-interest and the desire for possession. One of his characters says: imagine if "in viewing such a tract of country, as this delicious vale we see beneath us, you should for the enjoyment of the prospect, require the property or possession of the land" (Cooper 1999 [1711]: 319). This "covetous fancy," as he calls it, might be an enjoyment of its financial or agricultural value, but it could not be an enjoyment of its

beauty. Another of Shaftesbury's examples is the human body. "There are certain powerful forms in humankind," he writes, "which draw after them a set of eager desires, wishes, and hopes; no way suitable … to your rational and refined contemplation of beauty" (319). Later commenters captured Shaftesbury's view with the claim that, to appreciate beauty, we must be "disinterested," putting aside our personal desires and interests, and enjoying the object for its own sake (Stolnitz 1961).

It is this view of the aesthetic that gives rise to our problem, for in the case of consumer goods, it seems we are not disinterested – we *do* want to possess these objects to further our personal interests and satisfy our desires. One aspect of this involves the straightforward utility of consumer goods: a car gives us needed powers of transportation, a smartphone satisfies the urge to communicate more efficiently and so forth. But more subtle desires and interests can also be at play. The American sociologist Thorstein Veblen gave a classic account of this in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). Veblen believed that humans have an inherent desire to display their status, to make it known to others that they occupy a certain rank in the social hierarchy. In modern societies, Veblen thought, they do this by displaying wealth through the purchase of consumer goods, often ones that are quite useless when viewed from a utilitarian or an aesthetic perspective. Precisely because the goods in question are useless, this "conspicuous consumption," as Veblen called it, signals that the purchaser has surplus wealth, and hence is of a higher class. Veblen's analysis suggests that our admiration of consumer goods is not really disinterested: we value them, not for their aesthetic value or utility, but as indicators of status. On this view, our appreciation of consumer goods is akin to the "covetous fancy" of the greedy developer who eyes the landscape, and the hungry gaze of someone sexually aroused by the human body. The conclusion we might draw from all this is that consumer goods are not, after all, "suitable to the rational and refined contemplation of beauty."

Veblen's account of the forces driving consumer tastes is perhaps the best known, but it is only one of many similar sociological and historical analyses (for a sampling, see Lee 2000). These present consumer tastes as more than merely the product of status assertion; they take it to be shaped by diverse interests and desires, such as the need to shape and maintain social relations, the drive to articulate an individual or social identity and the need to assuage anxieties about contemporary life. But whichever of these differing analyses turns out to be correct, the basic challenge for an aesthetics of design remains: can we speak of aesthetic value in things that are the objects of so many personal desires and interests?

Finding aesthetic value in consumer goods

One response to this challenge is given by Postrel, who insists that a disinterested stance toward consumer goods is possible: she says that "surfaces matter, in and of themselves," and that "aesthetic pleasure is an autonomous good" (2003: 18, 89). Postrel defends this view by discussing the case of a woman who doesn't cook but nonetheless purchases a $7,000 stove. Postrel writes: "Does she say she wanted to stand out from the crowd? No, she describes the stove as a work of art … a painting that makes the kitchen look good." Postrel concludes that "the woman sees the stove primarily not as a status symbol but as an aesthetic pleasure" (2003: 76). The gist of

Postrel's argument is that introspection can reveal when our enthusiasm for an object is driven by concern for status and when it is driven merely by aesthetic considerations.

In this context, however, this appeal to introspection is problematic. To see this, we can return to Veblen's analysis of consumption. Veblen did not dispute the existence of disinterested appreciation. But he pointed out that consumers are typically poor judges of the motivations for their own actions, and have a habitual tendency to confuse the expensive marks of status with aesthetic value. Consumer goods affect us, he writes, "in such a way as to inextricably blend the marks of expensiveness, in our appreciation, with the beautiful features of the object, and to subsume the resultant effect under the head of an appreciation of beauty simply" (1899: 80). In other words, we think that we are appreciating the object for its aesthetic value, but this is because we cannot see that it is the promise of adulation and respect from others that is really drawing us toward it. Nonetheless, Veblen thought that if we look beyond people's own rationalizations for their behavior, what is really going on in these patterns of consumption is a sophisticated form of status display.

Apart from introspection, however, there is a second way to support the idea that consumer goods can have aesthetic value. Assume for a moment that the value we accord to consumer goods *is* reducible entirely to their value for status display, or some interest. Were we then to examine overall patterns of consumption, we should not expect to find any such goods standing the test of time. For as societies change, the utility of a given consumer item in relation to its social rituals is bound to change as well: the new television that is an effective marker of status today will be useless as such in five years. The question as to whether there can be a disinterested appraisal of value in consumer goods, then, can be recast as the question of whether some consumer goods have stood the test of time, as some classic works of art, such as the poetry of Homer, have done.

Have they? This question is complicated by two peculiarities of industrial design. First, unlike art, industrial design is a relatively recent cultural phenomenon, not predating the seventeenth century. Thus no product of industrial design has been around as long as a classic artwork like Homer's *Odyssey*. Second, unlike artworks, designed consumer goods often disappear from the marketplace, not because of any failure of design, but due to practical or technological obsolescence (as when VCRs were replaced by DVD players in the early 2000s). Thus we might wonder whether consumer goods even have the chance to face the test of time at all.

Given the rapid practical and technological obsolescence of everyday objects, a more apt way to conceive of their passing the test of time may be in terms of a *design type* living on as a stylistic influence on other goods (on designs as types, see Dilworth 2001). Consider some examples of widely recognized "design classics," such as George Carwardine's Anglepoise lamp, designed in the 1930s, and Dieter Rams's AB1 Braun alarm clock, designed in 1971 (Hamilton 2011; for further examples see Phaidon Press 2006). Though the Anglepoise lamp and the AB1 clock are no longer widely mass produced, the basic design type has been copied many times and lives on in innumerable cheap models. This influence speaks to a timeless quality – an aesthetic value – in these designs.

Thus, while acknowledging the complex interests at play in the allure of consumer goods, one can appeal to the concept of the design classic to ground an aesthetics of

design. While the concept of a "design classic" fits naturally enough with the modernist ethos of "good design," it seems difficult to square with a postmodern alternative, such as Postrel's. If items with aesthetic value stand the test of time, then, generally speaking, these have a universal appeal. Contrary to Postrel's claim, then, there is a difference between saying "I like that" and "this is good design." If I say "I like that," I point only to my personal preferences, which may be idiosyncratic. But if I say "this is good design," I imply that it satisfies some deeper preferences that are shared by all. The modernist conception of an objective notion of good design, transcending market popularity and personal taste, has reappeared.

Aesthetic value in consumer goods: functionalism

So it seems that there are reasons for holding onto one key element of the modernist agenda: the existence of genuine standards of aesthetic excellence for consumer goods. But this isn't helpful to us in trying to pick out aesthetically superior designs; nor is it any guide to the designers trying to create them. Can we say anything further about aesthetic value in consumer goods? Modernist theorists offered various ideas here, the most influential of which was functionalism, a view summed up in the famous slogan "form follows function" (De Zurko 1957). The basic idea comes across clearly in Loos's account, which suggests that a utilitarian object becomes truly beautiful when, and only when, all ornament is stripped away.

This view raises questions, however. A relentlessly practical and unaesthetic sensibility might find the elimination of ornament agreeable. But why should the stripping of everything irrelevant to function be thought to please us *aesthetically*? It seems implausible that the mere removal of ornament would always produce an aesthetically outstanding object. The functionalist ideal, however, can be better understood as the notion of an elegance or simplicity in the composition of the object, such that all the features present must be there in order for it to serve its function (Parsons and Carlson 2008: 96–98). Such objects possess a surprising economy in construction, which does seem to be a genuine aesthetic quality, one that we see manifested in many typically "modernist" designs. This idea is captured in a remark by the designer Jonathan Ive in the BBC documentary *The Genius of Design* (2010): "There is an inherent beauty when you reach the point: 'You couldn't possibly solve this problem with anything less.'"

Taken in this way, the basic idea of functionalism – that an object's form must follow its function – seems at least to offer a coherent aesthetic for design. But it may be objected that the view is too austere to provide a viable aesthetics of design. Even if there is aesthetic value in such elegance of construction, an emphasis on this quality might seem like a recipe for an aesthetically *unsatisfying* environment. Do we really want a world entirely composed of such earnest, humorless, *plain* objects?

From functionalism to functional beauty

One response to this objection would be to reject functionalism altogether for a more open attitude to the aesthetics of design. The designer Harold Van Doren, for

instance, once said that aesthetics is "fundamentally the art of using lines, forms, tones, colors and textures to arouse an emotional reaction in the beholder" (1954: 166). This definition suggests that an item's function is a matter distinct from its aesthetic merit, which concerns only its perceptible, formal qualities. However, this view does not fit the way we actually respond to consumer goods: function does matter deeply to aesthetic evaluation. Imagine a cast-iron wood stove with a glass door: it might look just fine as a stove. On the other hand, if the very same object were a safe, your aesthetic response to its form would be altogether different. And it would not help to be told that the safe looks good if you pretend it's a stove, or if you forget that it's a safe. For it *is* a safe, and that's how we must relate to it – as a safe. In sum, the function of utilitarian consumer goods is not separable from their aesthetic value; functionalism is correct in maintaining that aesthetically good consumer goods require a form that relates to their function in the right way.

Instead of abandoning functionalism, then, we might rethink it. Rather than seeing it as the view that all aesthetically good consumer goods have an elegant construction, we could see it as the view that they have "functional beauty" (Davies 2006; Parsons and Carlson 2008). This notion would be a broad one, including elegance of construction, but other varieties of aesthetic merit as well.

For instance, functional beauty could also encompass aesthetic features that do not emerge from the item's function (i.e. ornaments) so long as they are appropriately constrained by the item's function. This idea can be developed by reference to Kant's well-known notion of "adherent beauty." Kant distinguishes two ways to approach a utilitarian object, such as a church (2000 [1790]: 114). The first way is to appreciate what Kant calls its "free beauty," not thinking of what it is supposed to do, but savoring its "mere form": its shape, line and so on. On the other hand, you could appreciate its "adherent beauty," seeing it not merely as a collection of shapes and lines, but as something that must perform a certain task. In this case, we appreciate the church not merely as a form, but as a venue for worship. When an object has adherent beauty, as most consumer goods do, only certain forms of ornamentation are possible. As Kant observes, "One would be able to add much to a building that would be pleasing in the intuition of it if only it were not supposed to be a church" (2000 [1790]: 115). There is much in the decor of a nightclub to "immediately please the eye," for example, but placed in a church these same elements lose their visual appeal. A related variety of functional beauty, discussed by Stephen Davies, involves ornamentation that not only is compatible with the item's function, but aids in realizing that function, as when the elegant curves of a chair also make it comfortable for sitting (2006: 237).

Besides these functionally appropriate ornaments, the notion of functional beauty can also include other forms of aesthetic merit, such as an object's looking fit to perform its function. This is a quality cultivated in many areas of industrial design: consider, for instance, that icon of 1970s America, the muscle car. The essence of the muscle car is raw speed: the ability to barrel straight ahead as fast as possible. The muscle car displays features that make it *look* powerful: an engine protruding powerfully through the hood, a large and sturdy-looking bumper and grill, and a thick, muscular body. The function of the muscle car is rather obvious; in other cases (e.g. specialized tools) we may not be able to tell that an object looks fit for its

function until we learn what that function is. But in this respect, the aesthetic quality of "looking fit for function" is no different from other aesthetic qualities that are not perceptible without certain kinds of knowledge concerning the object's origin or type (Walton 1970; Danto 1981).

The idea that apparent fitness for function is a kind of beauty, or an aesthetic quality, has a long history in philosophical aesthetics (see Parsons and Carlson 2008: ch. 1). One important objection to this notion was raised in the eighteenth century by Edmund Burke. "On that principle," Burke wrote, "the wedge-like snout of a swine, with its tough cartilage at the end, the little sunk eyes, and whole make of the head, so well adapted to its offices of digging and rooting, would be extremely beautiful" (Burke 1958 [1757]: 105). Since pigs are not beautiful, Burke infers that fitness is not a source of beauty. But even if Burke is right that pigs are not beautiful, his counterexample is not as decisive as it may seem. Replying to Burke, Archibald Alison suggested that "in general we never consider the animals in the light of this Fitness of their construction" (1790: 342). Rather, Alison claimed, we focus on their most prominent features, such as their smell and filthiness, as well as their unpleasant "instincts," "characters" and "modes of life." These aesthetically negative aspects swamp out, as it were, the beauty of their elegantly adapted physiology. But "if the admirable Fitness of its construction," Alison held, "is explained, there is no person who will not feel from this view of it, an Emotion of Beauty" (1790: 317).

A further sort of aesthetic merit can also be encompassed by the notion of functional beauty. The classic modernist aesthetic discussed above emphasizes elegant construction, whereby objects have only those features that are necessitated by the function of the item. But functional objects can also have aesthetic appeal, not by having features that seem necessitated by function, but in virtue of having features that seem *at odds with*, or even incompatible with, their function. One example of this is the use of cantilevered design, a technique employed by Jeff Miller in his LittleBig chair (2006), designed for the firm Baleri Italia. One design website (<100percentdesign.net>) described the chair thus: "The body is only connected to the structure at the front; the seat therefore remains hanging in a void, combining superior comfort with a surprising aesthetic effect." The "surprising aesthetic effect" here is the result of the seat's fulfilling its function of supporting the mass of a sitting person, while *looking* insufficiently supported to so. This last form of functional beauty highlights particularly well the limitations of the traditional functionalist slogan of "form follows function" as an aesthetics of design. For here, form does not follow function, but instead enters into an oppositional relation to it, nonetheless producing a compelling aesthetic effect.

Functional beauty's acknowledgment of a more complex, but still essential, relation between form and function also helps us to bring into focus the task facing the contemporary designer. The designer's role is not merely to shellac a layer of attractive ornament onto a functional object, and neither is it merely to strip all ornament away from the engineer's functional apparatus. Rather, the designer's challenge is to create aesthetic appeal in the object by bringing its form into interesting and appropriate relations with its function. The aesthetic possibilities of design are different from, but no less rich, challenging and demanding of creativity, than those of art.

See also Kant (Chapter 5), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Beauty (Chapter 29), High art versus low art (Chapter 46), Architecture (Chapter 60).

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60
ARCHITECTURE

Edward Winters

Vitruvius (1960) writes that architecture must contain *firmitas, utilitas et venustas* (firmness, utility and delight). However, no systematic account of their integration is forthcoming and this leaves the constituent parts of architecture like randomly listed ingredients. Until we better understand the part each plays in its contribution to the whole, we remain at a loss.

How are we to appreciate architecture? Immediately we are confronted with the thought that when discriminating between building and architecture, we do so on the basis of some feature of architecture that lies beyond mere building. If so, then we appreciate architecture, as art, by isolating this additional characteristic and attending to it as the source of our aesthetic response. Thus, if we think of a building as a useful construction, we must ask what supplement is required to grant it the status of architecture – what bestows upon this edifice the status of an art?

A number of features have been identified as candidates, each said to confer the required elevation in status. Aestheticism, so called, picks out decoration as its preferred choice. Building adorned with decoration is architecture. Hence the difference between a bicycle shed and Lincoln Cathedral is that both are buildings but only the second is architecture. The cathedral is enhanced by decoration. Such a view can hardly be sustained after minimal reflection. It misconceives both aesthetics and architecture; for in isolating decoration, it thereby subtracts the function of the building from the realm of the aesthetic. We would be left with an object of appreciation so obscure as to be virtually unintelligible. Decoration, cut adrift from firmness and utility would, at best, amount to the merely pleasant. Such a misconception of aesthetics would thereby leave out of consideration the *significance* of the building. Then how best are we to think of significance in the aesthetics of architecture?

Architectural content

If architecture is to be thought *significant* it must be more than decorative. We should look to the philosophy of architecture to ascertain the nature of its significance. Thus, providing architecture with meaning is to provide it with a content that mere buildings do not enjoy.

The language of architecture

There are several positions that claim to provide architecture with linguistic standing. Concern with the significance of architecture over its pleasantness turns away from aesthetics and looks rather to the structure of language and its meaning. The structuralists, whose movement regarded all cultural artifacts as texts, included architecture in their remit. Roland Barthes's *Elements of Semiology* provided the template by which all things cultural could be subjected to codification and be thereby rendered textual (Barthes 1967).

Umberto Eco wrote specifically on architecture and begins his essay:

> If semiotics, beyond being the science of recognized systems of signs, is really to be a science studying *all* cultural phenomena *as if* they were systems of signs – on the hypothesis that all cultural phenomena *are*, in reality, systems of signs, or that culture can be understood as *communication* – then one of the fields in which it will undoubtedly find itself most challenged is that of architecture.
>
> (Eco 1997: 182)

Considering a staircase as sign Eco thinks it "*denotes* the *meaning* 'stair as a possibility of going up' on the basis of a code that I can work out and recognize as operative" (ibid.: 184).

After such readings of denotations Eco moves onto connotations in which ideological commitments can be discerned by the cultural analysis made available by structuralist techniques. Roughly, when we decipher what a building referentially means (denotation) we can then derive its implicatory significance (connotation). An essay by Barthes provides us with a picture of the intellectual ambition of the movement and the scientific importance they attributed to their program:

> The city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language: the city speaks to its inhabitants, we speak our city, the city where we are, simply by living in it, by wandering through it, by looking at it. Still the problem is to bring an expression like "the language of the city" out of the purely metaphorical stage … The real scientific leap will be realized when we speak of a language of the city without metaphor.
>
> (Barthes 1997: 168)

There are many reasons why the structuralist program failed, not least Barthes's rejection of the program in favor of post-structuralism – a view that surrendered the idea that fixed meanings could be provided for cultural artifacts. Instead we were to regard language as constantly deferring its meanings since every use of a word requires a "throwing back" onto a definition comprising other words, themselves in need of definition. So the meanings of artifacts, like the meanings of words in a language, were ever in need of deferred definition, and so hostage to the whim of the playful reader. The relevance of structuralist and post-structuralist accounts is considered at greater length in my *Aesthetics and Architecture* (Winters 2007).

The semantic theory

A very general view of architectural meaning is proposed by Nelson Goodman (1988). In his efforts to give a unified and systematic account of everything cultural, Goodman sets out to show the variety of routes that an interpreter might take from building to referent. Call this the semantic theory. A building can denote its referent. We are to think of denotation as a simple relation in need of no further explanation. The words "city" and "Berlin" both denote Berlin, but so too, according to Goodman, does a picture postcard of that city. The Sydney Opera House denotes sailing boats. Understanding what the Sydney Opera House means is to apprehend the reference to sailing boats.

Not all buildings denote. Buildings can have other sorts of meaning. A building can exemplify the properties to which it refers. Reference in exemplification runs counter to reference in denotation. The direction of denotation is language to world, whereas in exemplification it is world to language. A tailor's swatch exemplifies some (but not all) of the properties of the squares of material to be found in its contents. The weave, the pattern, the relative weight of the cloth, the color and so on, are all properties that the samples of material exemplify. The shape of the cloth, with its pinking-sheared edge and its size are not so exemplified. In consequence they are not referred to by the tailor's swatch. Thus, context prescribes those properties that are referred to by means of exemplification. A modernist building of a certain sort might be said to exemplify its means of construction. A building by the Dutch architect Rietveld, for instance, might be thought to separate elements into beams, columns, frames and openings in order that the elemental "putting-together-of-the-building" becomes exemplified. Goodman writes: "in other buildings made of columns, beams, frames and walls, the structure is not exemplified at all, serving only practical and perhaps also other symbolic functions" (ibid.: 38) and continues:

> a purely formal building that neither depicts anything nor expresses any feelings or ideas is sometimes held not to function as a symbol at all. Actually, it exemplifies certain of its properties, and only so distinguishes itself from buildings that are not works of art at all.
>
> (ibid.: 41)

The phenomenon sketched out here is what Goodman calls "literal exemplification." The building literally possesses the properties that it exemplifies. But some of the properties that a building exemplifies could not be attributed to a pile of stones and glass and steel. No building could literally exemplify "soaring and singing"; but a number of Gothic cathedrals might metaphorically exemplify these properties. Goodman labels this form of reference "expression." A building can express properties that it does not literally possess.

Common to both the structuralist view and to Goodman's view sketched out here is the idea that our understanding of architecture is to be grasped in linguistic terms. But while both accounts answer the questions asked earlier, neither affords an account of the content of architectural *experience*. We do not just "read off" the meaning of a building. We make evaluative judgments. And so our appreciation involves aesthetic appraisal; and this goes *further* than linguistic understanding.

Representation and re-presentation

Architectural theorists have provided a view that is often given in defense of classicism. Call this the "representational theory." This account has a forceful proponent in Vitruvius. The line of inheritance can be traced through Alberti (1955), William Chambers (1757) and more lately to Demitri Porphyrios (1982). This view claims the classical building and its elements refer to the primitive building and its elements. Each one is *formalized* and is thereby represented. The column represents the cut-down tree; the capital represents a pad that sits the wooden beam atop it. In its formalization, the classical building refers beyond itself to the elements of primitive building: to its primitive materials and to its construction. But it does so in enduring materials: in stone and marble, for instance. In formalizing the primitive, the classical building represents the building that is its referent. Moreover, this view enjoys the generality at which the philosophy of architecture should aim. The argument is that whereas other styles of architecture are merely fashionable dressing, merely a way of stylistic decoration, classicism gives architecture a content that can be apprehended by the intellect. Classicism is, supposedly, the only intelligible form of architecture.

A yet more recent and more philosophically advanced version of the theory is rehearsed in Karsten Harries's *The Ethical Function of Architecture*:

> Could it be that … it is precisely its self-reference that gives architecture its distinctive voice and raises it above mere building? … [T]o deserve to be called a work of architecture, a house cannot just be a house … [T]he house must represent a house, and by so doing, re-present itself as a house: Goethe might say, create the fiction of a house. The same can be said of a church, a museum, a city hall, an airport. Representing other architecture, the work of architecture re-presents itself in the image of an ideal, thus creating a fiction about itself:
>
> (Harries 1997: 119–20)

Harries uses re-presentation to reinstate decoration; and hence he returns us to aesthetics if not aestheticism. Importantly, he uses re-presentation to integrate *firmitas, utilitas et venustas*:

> This association of re-presentation and decoration invites a reconsideration of the difference between decoration and ornament. Can we perhaps understand ornament as decoration that serves to so re-present the decorated that it presents itself to us as a fiction of itself? Ruskin's attempt to locate what distinguishes architecture from mere building in the addition of ornament becomes more plausible when we understand ornament as having a re-presentational function.
>
> (ibid.: 120)

Notwithstanding Harries's running together denotation and representation, there is a clear sense that the spectator's experience is involved in the appreciation of the building. For the spectator is to "see-in" the building "the image of an ideal."

Content and the aesthetics of architecture

Since the *aesthetic appreciation* of a building requires an account of experience, we are entitled to ask what role does experience play in architectural understanding? This provides a challenge to the content theories. It is in the understanding of the work of architecture that my pleasure resides and such understanding justifies my experience. For we can make evaluative judgments of buildings. What places constraints upon the architect and his critic is the context that guides or limits the occasion of the architect's work. That context is the broad tradition within which the architect works. It is within the tradition that I can come to criticize the work before me and which places upon my description of the work the pressure to see it this way rather than that. It may be true that in appreciating classical buildings I *see* the building as connected with primitive forms of construction; however, it remains difficult to see how the building is *of* the primitive hut in any way comparable to ways in which portraits are of their sitters or novels are about political skulduggery. It may be part of the *content of my experience* that I connect the classical building with primitive construction, but that does not entail that primitive construction forms part of the *representational* content of the classical building. Our appreciation of a classical building can constitute an aesthetic appreciation without any recognition of the ancient origins of its form. (This is not to deny that once we do so recognize those origins, we can have our aesthetic appreciation enriched.) But would it make sense to say that we could have (even a partial) aesthetic appreciation of a portrait or a novel if we failed to grasp its representational content?

What the representational theorist takes for the representational relation is, perhaps, better conceived as a connection between works of art generally, so that in experiencing one work, the spectator's experience of other works colors her present experience. So, when I am standing in the cloister of Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattrofontane, for instance, my experience of that building will be more or less rich depending on my familiarity with the history of art pertinent to the building in which I stand. Provided that I am acquainted with the classical orders and the strictness demanded in their application, I shall see the cloister as impertinent, audacious or outrageous. These descriptions will capture my experience in virtue of my other architectural experiences. They will explain my amusement at the building or my sneaking admiration or my utter disgust. And in explaining why I so see the building I will call upon another to share that experience. But my response is contained in my experience and so I have not ventured beyond it in accounting for my appreciation.

We can now begin to see how an understanding of a work of architecture brings with it an evaluation that is characteristic of our appreciation of works of art generally. To understand a building is to see it in a certain way. It is to be disposed to give such and such descriptions that articulate the experiences that we have in its presence. Such understanding can be clumsy, rudimentary, deep or subtle. And it can vary in degrees according to how much attention we pay to the building under scrutiny. However, this admission of degrees of understanding can easily be accommodated within the context of a wider aesthetic theory that places emphasis upon the experience of the spectator. The semantic theory, by contrast, seems to make it an all-or-nothing grasping of the building's meaning. Moreover, the semantic theory seems incapable of uniting meaning and evaluation.

This complaint against Goodman's view needs pressing. For if a building is weak in some respect or if it is an example of a type, but only a mediocre example, or if it is clumsy or drab, then these descriptions are relevant to our aesthetic estimation of it. That is, these features are part of the "meaning-for-us" of the building. But the semantic theory cannot bring this out. The description of the experience of the building throws the weight from the object in the world (the building) to the object of our experience (the building as seen). We value architecture because of the way that we have come to experience it; and we have come to experience it as we do because of the ways in which we inhabit it.

Functionalism

In distinguishing architecture from other arts, it is clear that works of architecture are constrained by an understanding of them as functional objects. Buildings are pressed into our service and it is, at least in part, in respect of their fitness for purpose that we come to appreciate them. As Kant puts it:

> [T]he beauty of a … building … does presuppose the concept of the purpose that determines what the thing is [meant] to be, and hence a concept of its perfection, and so it is merely adherent beauty.
>
> (Kant 1987: 76)

And again,

> in architecture the main concern is what use is to be made of the artistic object, and this use is a condition to which the aesthetic ideas are confined.
>
> (ibid.: 191)

It is the confinement of aesthetic ideas to the condition of use that requires attention in our appreciation of architecture; and so architecture cannot be understood in the same way as sculpture, for instance.

Functionalism is a doctrine, or group of doctrines, that addresses this individuating feature of architecture. It provides an account of what is peculiar to architecture in the way in which it engenders our understanding, but it has two ideals of what that understanding is. The first of these regards functionalism as the ground for our aesthetic understanding, while the second simply rejects *aesthetic* understanding in favor of social science. Functionalism, in one form or other, has exerted an enormous influence over architectural practice, its history and its theory.

In both its strands, functionalism can be seen to have developed from the structural rationalism to be found in the writings of Viollet-le-Duc:

> There are in architecture … two indispensable ways in which truth must be adhered to. We must be true in respect of programme, and true in respect of the constructive processes. To be true in respect of the programme is to fulfil exactly, scrupulously, the conditions imposed by the requirements of

> the case. To be true in respect of the constructive processes is to employ the materials according to their qualities and properties.
>
> (Viollet-le-Duc 1959: 448)

He goes on to recommend that *artistic* considerations of symmetry and apparent form are only secondary in the presence of these two dominant principles. What emerged from Viollet-le-Duc's *Discourses* was a commitment to architecture that *expressed* the program and the structure of the building. Such expression is to be *seen* in the building under review and it is a mark of a work's success that we regard it as true to these principles. But such regard is only really coherent if the "truth" of the building shows up in our experience. Viollet-le-Duc's conception of architecture was, therefore, an aesthetic conception, since it makes claims about how a building can be properly conceived and appreciated in accordance with recommendations of appropriateness.

Aesthetic functionalism

One strand of modernism arising from this background regards the function of a building as determining its form, so that the form of the building is aesthetically conceived as being appropriate to the utility for which the building was designed. According to this view, the beauty of a building is to be assessed in terms of its form in relation to its function. We must consider the utility of a building when considering the aptness of its form. This way of putting the matter immediately demonstrates its appeal. Architecture is the *art* of building. Further, it peculiarly engages our aesthetic understanding by its functional aspect prescribing its form. And this functional prescription just is what provides architecture with its status as an art. Our responses to works of architecture constrain us to *see* how the built form is appropriate to the purpose of the building. Rather than reducing artistic concerns to secondary status, the *expression of function* becomes the peculiar aesthetic consideration intrinsic to works of architecture.

Austere functionalism

The second strand of functionalism deriving from structural rationalism is really a dismissal of aesthetic considerations altogether. According to the conception of function as socially determined, we need to pay no attention to how the building is seen. Hence the building is a product of its function if it best facilitates the activity for which it is designed. (For instance, I am unconcerned with the *look* of my car brakes. My interest is in their capacity to bring my car to a stop.) The concept of function here is akin to that used in engineering. As such it is not an aesthetic theory at all, but rather regards aesthetics as a separate matter, an accidental bonus at best, entirely irrelevant or even *false consciousness* at worst. That this is an ideal to which modern architects have been inclined can be gleaned from *La Sarraz Declaration* 1928 of CIAM (Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne; 1979). The Declaration emphasized building rather than architecture. It sought to place architecture, not in the context of the broader arts, but in the context of economics, politics and social science. It aimed to replace the particular work of the individual craftsman with

more general industrial processes and sought "the universal adoption of rationalized production methods" (Frampton 1985: 269).

Regarded by many as the home of modernist functionalism, the Bauhaus formed a department of architecture in 1927 under the leadership of Swiss architect Hannes Meyer. One year later, upon the resignation of Walter Gropius as director, Meyer succeeded him:

> Meyer organized the Bauhaus into four major departments: architecture (now called "building" for polemical reasons), advertising, wood and metal production, and textiles. Supplementary scientific courses, such as industrial organization and psychology, were introduced into all departments, while the building section shifted its emphasis to the economic optimization of plan arrangements and to methods for the precise calculation of light, sunlight, heat loss/gain, and acoustics.
>
> (Ibid.: 129)

It is worth noting that the buildings, furniture and fittings designed by austere functionalists *are worth looking at*. That is, whatever the claims of the designers and their supportive theorists, the work is aesthetically estimable. Austere functionalism is a prime example of a critically engaged theory that immunizes its works from *aesthetic* criticism (by removing them from its orbit) and thereby promotes and protects its adherents in their artistic practice.

Functionalism, under both its aspects we might feel, is inadequate as an account of our aesthetic responses to architecture. For the notion of function, in the context of architecture, remains irredeemably vague. Consider, for instance, the urban design of the square. Take the Plaza Major in Madrid. What is its function? On Tuesdays it is a market, on Saints' days it is a fairground, on Sundays townspeople gather to parade in their finery. It was, at one time, the venue for bullfights. During the Inquisition it was used for show trials and ritual executions. It now houses offices and a range of cheap to expensive hotel accommodation. That is, the life of its design – the range of activities made available by it – has outstripped any restrictive conception of the function for which it was designed. It seems merely stipulative to deem any of its varied historical uses illegitimate. Moreover, since the business of aesthetics is born of a conception of ourselves as free, we might think it is of the essence of our conception of architectural utility that it should remain irredeemably vague, so that any morally permissible human purpose might be pursued within the designed environment. It remains true that while the fact that a building has utility enters into our conception of the nature of architecture, we cannot be required to specify in detail what particular use a building must have. As Scruton has put it, it is unclear "how any particular 'function' is to be translated into architectural 'form.' All we can say … is that buildings have uses, and should not be understood as though they did not" (1979: 40).

Function

Gordon Graham seeks to resolve a perceived dilemma facing us when considering architecture as a visual art. Either we deem the artifice of ornament additional and

extraneous to the building, in which case it becomes a "decorated shed," or we surrender the idea that architecture is an art (Graham 2007: 131–32). Since neither horn is acceptable Graham seeks to reconsider architecture in terms of "appropriation." In appropriating space we come to dress it in the image of home. We modify our surroundings, that is, so as best to accommodate our way of life. As such there is a "fittingness" that architecture strives toward. When successful the building is

> specially fitted to its function by giving it certain architectural features rather than others. So … the soaring spire and vaulted ceiling give the Gothic cathedral a feeling of grandeur amounting almost to transcendence, and thus incline and enable the faithful to find this a place where worship of the divine is easier.
>
> (Ibid.: 134)

Graham's call upon us to recognize the "fittingness" of architecture to our purposes solves the problem of integrating the appearance of the building with the fact that it is a functional object. However, his rejection of Kant's aesthetics overlooks the latter's concern to fit architecture into his scheme of the fine arts. Kant is not faced with the dilemma that Graham identifies. As Kant puts it:

> *Architecture* is the art of exhibiting concepts of things that are possible *only through art*, things whose form does not have nature as its determining basis but instead a chosen purpose, and of doing so in order to carry out that aim and yet also with aesthetic purposiveness. In architecture the main concern is what *use* is to be made of the artistic object, and this use is a condition to which the aesthetic ideas are confined.
>
> (Kant 1987: 191)

Kant regards the beauty of many fine arts as "adherent beauty"; and so for each such art there is a concept of what the thing is meant to be – a painting is meant to represent, for instance. How paintings represent is something we have to take into consideration when judging them. The purpose of architecture is to accommodate. How buildings accommodate is something we have to take into consideration when judging buildings. And so this is something we look for in the appearance of the work. As Paul Guyer puts it,

> any work of architecture also has a "voluntary end" or intended use that restricts it and, apparently, what aesthetic ideas it can present, and indeed this intended use is the "main thing," and in all architecture the "appropriateness of the product to a certain use is essential." Thus, the restriction on what or how aesthetic ideas may be expressed that is supposed to follow from this is also essential to architecture.
>
> (Guyer 2011: 16–17)

So Kant and his followers, when considering architecture, are not committed to the formalism that we find in Kant's writings on pure beauty. Indeed Kant anticipates

the move that Graham makes toward the idea of accommodation and appropriation by confining the aesthetic ideas to the condition of use.

Everyday aesthetics

If we move away from the idea of architecture as a language, we feel less inclined to think of this art as communication. The architect makes buildings that meet the needs of a community. In this there is no special concern with communication. Rather the notion that guides the designer's work is rightness. Wittgenstein, in his lectures on aesthetics (1978), talked of the height of a door frame being right, of the width of a lapel as being right, and conceded that these judgments of rightness could change over time as a matter of fashion. However, the rightness of which he spoke is a settlement among a community whose common sense of appearance is embodied in the clothes, buildings, sporting pursuits and other forms of social decorum in which individuals come together. Against the strictures of high art, the everyday invokes aesthetic judgment that embraces a community in its entirety. Architecture is an essentially public art and as such it impinges upon the whole community. Thus, it is an art that draws the social, political and aesthetic into a single arena – where the social, moral and political realities of a community impress their shape onto the shared landscape. It is from this perspective that Roger Scruton has developed a view of everyday aesthetics from which he derives a defense of classical architecture. Leaving aside his considerations of the classical, he claims that the recognition of ourselves in the settlement with others is given outward form in everyday aesthetics.

> Aesthetic choices correlate with a particular kind of *satisfaction*: the satisfaction that comes when things look, sound or feel just right.
>
> The social significance of this is easy to understand. Presentations are our avatars: they make us known to others and are ways of soliciting their endorsement for what we are. But they are also instruments of self-knowledge. They are part of the process that Fichte and Hegel called *Entäusserung*, the making outwards, real, objective of the inner life, the process through which the subject knows himself as object in a world of beings like himself … [I]t seems to me that the aesthetic has to be included as a "moment" … in the process of self-realization.
>
> (Scruton 2011: 312)

Scruton is not alone in focusing upon architecture as a way of broadening our conception of aesthetics to include a greater cultural compass than is traditionally treated in the fine arts. Indeed the notion of a home might begin to find its way into the other arts – so that the fine arts begin to be reckoned along lines laid out by the aesthetics of architecture. Certainly, the emerging discipline of visual culture takes artifacts of everyday presence and looks to them as episodes of political meaning. Several philosophers are moving in this direction (Goldblatt and Paden 2011). In particular, Andrew Ballantyne's conception of architecture as a site characterized by everyday habit, the site of the aesthetic, moves from the appearance of the building in isolation to the background against which our habits are to be seen.

> [I]f we are to apprehend a building's everyday character … then we need to understand it by way of the habits of everyday life. The building will support some habits, and might obstruct others, but crucially the thing that makes it satisfying is the match between the building and the life that goes on in and through it. The role of aesthetics can be to articulate an appreciation of the fitness of the match between the place and the *ethos*, to see the building through the habits of daily life. By doing so it becomes possible to see how the boundary between a space and its occupants can blur, so that the "organized being" has an identity that extends beyond the organic body into its territory.
>
> (Ballantyne 2011: 48)

The aesthetics of architecture has long sought the additional feature responsible for the elevation of building to the level of architecture. Guyer neatly posits the required relation between the form a building takes and the function it serves as an *interaction*. "[I]n such cases our pleasure in objects is not so to speak just added but multiplied" (2011: 15).

See also Kant (Chapter 5), Goodman (Chapter 18), Environmental aesthetics (Chapter 47), Sculpture (Chapter 58).

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Further reading

Haldane, J. (1999) "Form and Meaning in Architecture," *Journal of Architecture* 4: 9–20. (A survey of the ways in which built form has been imbued with meaning.)
Hamilton, A. (2012) "The Autonomy of Architecture," in Andy Hamilton and Nick Zangwill (eds) *Roger Scruton's Aesthetics*, London: Palgrave Macmillan. (Assesses Scruton's antimodernist appeal to architecture's vernacular elements, and to its public and functional nature, arguing that his conservative communitarian critique of modernism understates architecture's artistic conception, and concluding that architecture could be regarded as a high art whose autonomy is qualified by functionality, publicity and the patronage relation.)
Scruton, R. (1994) *The Classical Vernacular: Architectural Principles in the Age of Nihilism*, Manchester: Carcanet. (In a collection of essays spanning twenty years, Scruton develops a range of philosophical arguments in defense of classicism and against modernism.)
Van Eck, C. (1994) *Organicism in Nineteenth Century Architecture*, Amsterdam: Architectura and Natura Press. (Studies the history and philosophy of organicism from antiquity to the eighteenth century and provides an interpretive account of this important strand of architecture and its theory.)
Winters, E. (2012) "Against Neatness and the Neateners who would Neaten Us," in Andy Hamilton and Nick Zangwill (eds) *Roger Scruton's Aesthetics*, London: Palgrave Macmillan. (Argues for a broader conception of architecture than the classicism demanded by Scruton.)

61
MUSIC

Andrew Kania

Music and art

It is unsurprising that there are chapters on literature, painting and music in this volume – if they're not arts, nothing is. It is almost as predictable that there are chapters devoted to topics such as depiction and metaphor. The issues raised by depiction and metaphor are central to the artistic use of pictures and language, yet these topics do not pertain exclusively to art (there are lots of pictures that are not artworks, such as maps, diagrams and holiday snaps; people use metaphors in all sorts of contexts). Should it be surprising that there is no such counterpart chapter for music? In short, can there be music that is not art?

Most philosophers who have discussed music seem to have assumed that all music is artistic; at least they have ignored nonartistic music. For instance, Jerrold Levinson argues that music is "sounds temporally organized by a person for the purpose of enriching or intensifying experience through active engagement (e.g. listening, dancing, performing) with the sounds regarded primarily, or in significant measure, as sounds" (1990a: 273). This is an "aesthetic" definition of music insofar as it requires the musician to aim at eliciting a certain kind of heightened experience in the audience. If you think, however, that a lullaby sung to put a baby to sleep is an example of music, then it is a counterexample to this definition, since the singer intends precisely the opposite of active engagement on the baby's part. Levinson considers the example of muzak, claiming that his definition rightly excludes it (1990a: 274). But it seems plausible that muzak is music – albeit *bad* music – and thus that a definition that allows for nonartistic music, such as lullabies and muzak, would be preferable to one that doesn't.

Roger Scruton suggests that what makes a sound music is that it "exists within a musical 'field of force'" (1997: 17). For instance, when you knock your wine glass against another during a toast, the sound it emits will have a certain *frequency*, perhaps a frequency that corresponds to one of the keys on a piano. But the sound does not thereby have a *pitch* (e.g. middle C) because it is not heard as such. So if a glass further down the table emits the frequency corresponding to a G, you will not wait for the harmonic tension to be resolved by the appearance of another C, as you would if you were listening to a bass line. By putting it this way, Scruton makes being music a subjective matter – if you *do* hear the sounds of these wine glasses as

introducing harmonic tension, they are thereby musical notes. When we turn to central examples of music, however, this subjectivism has unfortunate consequences. If you do not hear the sounds produced by a musical group from an unfamiliar culture as music, they are thereby not music – at least for you. It would accord better with our conception of music (and human creation in general) to make the musical status of sounds depend on the actions of those producing them, rather than the attitudes of those listening.

I have thus suggested an intentionalist definition along Scrutonian lines, according to which music is "(1) any event intentionally produced or organized (2) to be heard, and (3) *either* (a) to have some basic musical feature, such as pitch or rhythm, *or* (b) to be listened to for such features" (Kania 2011: 12). Because this definition appeals to "basic musical features," it allows for the distinction, argued for by Andy Hamilton (2007: 40–65), between music and (nonmusical) sound art. (By contrast, Levinson must count "sound art" as music, since it meets all the conditions of his definition.) But the disjunctive third condition allows for a further distinction between "indiscernible" works of music and sound art. Suppose Yoko Ono and John Cage independently took copies of the same recording of a toilet flushing and presented them as works of art. It would seem a significant difference if Ono intended you to listen to the sounds for features such as pitch and rhythm (even though these expectations would be frustrated), while Cage intended you to listen to them as the pure sounds they are in themselves. This definition captures the difference, classifying Ono's work as music but not Cage's, even though they sound the same.

To return to the issue we opened with, since a lullaby has pitches and rhythms, and is intended to be heard, it counts as music according to this definition. But is it art? On the present account, this is a separate question, presumably to be decided by a general theory of art, rather than a musical theory in particular. For instance, those with inclinations towards an aesthetic theory of art might argue that the lullaby is art in virtue of its beauty, while institutionalists may argue that the singer in this case does not possess the institutional authority in the art-music world to transform this music into art. (See "Definitions of art," Chapter 21 of this volume.) Whatever theory of art is proposed, though, it is likely that some music will be excluded, such as musical exercises (scales, arpeggios and so on), doorbells and simple ringtones. The features that make these things music are what could be addressed in a chapter on music in the art-neutral sense, just as the chapters on pictorial representation and metaphor in this volume have application to nonartistic uses of pictures and language.

The value of music

Music, like anything, can be valuable for all sorts of instrumental reasons: Lullabies are useful for putting recalcitrant babies to sleep, ringtones let us know when someone is calling us and so on. But many have thought there is something more intrinsically valuable about much music, especially musical works of art (understood to include performances, recordings, etc.). The idea is that while any soporific lullaby might do to put the baby to sleep, whatever it is that we value in our favorite piece of music is essentially tied up with an experience of its individual features, making it

irreplaceable as a means to that experience. In the remainder of this chapter, I consider two aspects of music that philosophers have argued are centrally valuable: its emotional expressivity and its formal features.

Consider a song, such as Radiohead's "We Suck Young Blood," from *Hail to the Thief* (2003). If you think it is a *good* song, what is it about it that makes this so? (For all the questions and answers that follow, there are obvious counterparts if you think the song is bad or mediocre.) Part of the answer may be that the lyrics are powerful, whether you interpret them to be about aging stars in the music industry, intergenerational relations in general, or factory farming. But, as with most songs, the lyrics seem rather thin when read by themselves. Clearly, the musical components of the song contribute greatly to what makes it good. (If I wrote a song with the same lyrics, it would not be nearly as good.) For instance, the glacial tempo, the insistently chromatic piano accompaniment and the languidly scattered handclaps reinforce the gloominess of the lyrics. But how can purely musical features such as these imbue the sounds with an emotional quality such as *gloominess*? This question, of how music can express emotions, is perhaps the one on which most ink has been spilled in contemporary philosophy of music.

Emotional expressivity

It might be tempting at first to think that the gloominess of the music is easily explained by the gloominess of the lyrics. But this can't be the whole story. After all, setting the same lyrics to the music of the Beatles's "Can't Buy Me Love" would not make that music gloomy. Rather, the music suits the lyrics precisely because it is, antecedently, emotionally expressive. However, it may be that the music does not by itself express *gloominess* exactly. Perhaps in itself the music is languid, dark and off-kilter, and the lyrics sharpen this feeling to one of gloominess in particular. We might say similar things about music's ability to represent things other than emotions. It is plausible that the music of an instrumental work such as Smetana's "Moldau" represents (or perhaps simply exemplifies) a general structure of small elements in motion coming together to form one large movement. Smetana's "program" may be enough to make this a matter of representing several tributaries leading to a great river (the piece is one of a cycle of works entitled *Má Vlast* (*My Country*); its particular subject is the Czech river). But the same music could be successfully used in a film, say, to represent a multitude of people joining in a pilgrimage.

What explains the music's antecedent expressive properties – those it possesses before the addition of (or in the absence of) lyrics or a program? One answer that remains persistently appealing, despite its rejection by most philosophers, is the theory of *expressionism*: the emotional properties of the music are those felt by the musicians (the composer and/or performer), expressed through the music. One objection to this view is analogous to the one given above. Just as music is antecedently more or less appropriate for combination with a given text, it is antecedently more or less appropriate for the expression of some felt emotion. This suggests that the expressivity of the music is independent of its use as an expression of an actually felt emotion and explains how people can fail to express what they intend to in their

compositions and performances. A related objection is that it seems possible for people to create highly expressive music without having experienced the emotions it expresses. None of this shows that people cannot express their emotions by producing music, but it leaves the central puzzle unsolved: how is it that music can be expressive in the absence of literal expression?

Another enduringly popular but philosophically problematic solution is *arousalism*, according to which music has the emotional properties it does in virtue of arousing those emotions in listeners. The two main objections to the view are both claims that it gets things the wrong way around. First, when music does arouse a certain emotion in a listener, it seems usually to be *because the music is expressive*. But this would mean that the expressivity would be logically prior to the arousal, and hence couldn't be constituted by it. (This point raises two further problems for the theory. First, some people seem not to be emotionally moved by music at all, even when they recognize that it is emotionally expressive. Second, the emotion aroused by the music need not be the emotion it expresses. For example, the gloominess of "We Suck Young Blood" may elicit *horror* in you, rather than making you feel gloomy yourself.) The second main objection to the arousal theory is that by locating the emotion in the *listener* it fails to explain the emotion in the *music*. As Derek Matravers puts it, "hearing music as sad is not equivalent to hearing music and feeling sad … [Moreover,] the feeling ends up in the wrong place: not in the music, but in the head of the listener" (2011: 218; Matravers goes on to consider two recent limited, but more sophisticated, arousalist theories).

Perhaps the most popular view among philosophers recently has been that a musical passage expresses an emotion in virtue of resembling some aspect of the emotion as ordinarily experienced by people. Susanne Langer's early version of this view suggests that music resembles the phenomenology, or inner feeling, of emotional states (Langer 1953). One problem with this view is that the phenomenological components of emotions seem too thin to ground the particularity of expression many find in music. For instance, rage and joy may share a kind of upwards-rushing feeling; thus, if the music resembles only that feeling, it will be at best ambiguous. (Langer embraced the conclusion that music cannot express particular emotions.) Most resemblance theorists have instead argued that music resembles not just the phenomenology of a given emotion, but its typical vocal, facial or behavioral expressions (e.g. Kivy 1989; Davies 1994). Thus, the music of "We Suck Young Blood" is gloomy because it resembles the typical behavior of a gloomy person, even though no one is actually expressing their gloominess through the song, just as a basset hound's face is sad because it resembles the typical facial expression of a sad person, even though the dog is not actually expressing its emotional state through its physiognomy.

One objection to resemblance theories is that they do not get to the heart of expressivity. The fact that a musical passage resembles something does not thereby imply that it expresses that thing. If a musical passage and a basset hound's face both resemble a sad person, then the musical passage resembles the basset hound's face (and vice versa); the fact that the musical passage doesn't express or represent a basset hound shows that there must be more to expressivity than resemblance. Jerrold Levinson (2006) argues that the missing factor is that the musical passage typically

causes us to *imagine* that its contours are an actual expression of emotion by a person (but does not typically cause us to imagine that they are the contours of a dog's face). Stephen Davies (2006) resists this addition because he thinks, first, that it is implausible that listeners necessarily or even typically imagine that there is some person in or behind the music, expressing themselves through it and, second, that you do not need to posit such a response in order to respond to the objection. In fact, resemblance theorists have always given some sort of dispositional account of our responses to music. They argue that, for some psychological reason, we are simply disposed to hear musical passages as expressive of emotions, and not as representing dogs' faces. This does not require imagining that anyone is literally expressing themselves, any more than believing the temperature has risen requires imagining that something has literally moved upwards in space.

There is one other way that most philosophers agree music can express emotions, namely by convention. For instance, in Western music the minor mode has come to express darker emotional states. Exactly how and when this came about and the extent to which it is still the case are complicated musicological questions, but it is relatively uncontroversial that it is a convention based in part in a slow accretion of cultural associations between the minor mode and an unsettled feeling. The lack of controversy is due to two facts. First, there is no obvious significant difference between the resemblance to ordinary emotional expression of the contours of a minor triad or melody and the closest major triad or melody, yet they clearly differ in their expressivity. Second, musical systems are culturally contingent. Being an expert practitioner or theorist in one culture's music is of little to no use in assessing the expressivity of the music of an unfamiliar culture. It is difficult to determine how much musical expressivity is due to convention and how much to some other kind of reason; it could be that philosophers have focused on the latter kinds of explanation not because they account for the lion's share of expressivity but because they are more philosophically interesting.

Some have argued that, however music expresses emotions, this expressivity cannot be enough to explain music's value. For one thing, the mere fact that music is expressive is not obviously a reason to value it. Emoticons express emotions, but we do not consider them valuable works of art. Of course, it is plausible that we value musical expressions of emotion because they are more richly detailed than emoticons. But still, why value an expression of emotion at all, especially if it is not an emotion anyone is actually experiencing? One answer might be that we just do value accurate, detailed representations of things. The value we accord to music's expression of emotion is in this respect no more puzzling than that we accord to the lifelike narrative of a novel or the realism of a lobster in an oil painting (Kivy 1989: 112–31). Another might be that in appreciating expressive music, we do not simply *observe* the emotions expressed, but ourselves experience those emotions, or others, in response. Perhaps this experience is cathartic, purging us of somehow unhealthy emotions. Or perhaps it helps us understand our emotional states or capacities, or is simply pleasurable in itself (Levinson 1990b). (In the case of "negative" emotions, such as gloominess, we might obviously prefer to have such experiences in the absence of their usual causes.)

Against all this it may be argued that other art forms are superior to music in expressing emotional states, and thus that these explanations fail to account for a

significant portion of music's value (Goldman 1992: 35–37; Budd 1995: 155–57). It is plausible that there are some emotional states that music is powerless to express, for instance those with complex intentional structures, such as envy. And, of course, representational arts are much better at presenting us with emotions in fully realized contexts, which might suggest these arts are superior to music in, say, helping us to understand our emotional states and capacities. However, it is not obvious that other arts' superiority in representing or expressing emotions implies that they are superior in eliciting the emotional *responses* that lead to such benefits.

Musical form

However these disputes are resolved, some have argued that music's emotional expressivity cannot account for its great value. They point to the fact that there are extremely valuable works of music (such as many of Bach's fugues) that are not particularly expressive, and that, in general, the differences in value between pieces of music can hardly be accounted for in terms of differences in their expressivity. These theorists argue that it is *formal* features of musical works that account for the greatest part of their value (Budd 1995; Goldman 1992; Kivy 1990, 2009). The formal features of a piece of music are traditionally understood as those that have to do with the relationships of various parts of the piece to one another. So, we recognize that we are encountering the second verse of a song when the same musical material returns accompanying different words, and that we are encountering a return of the chorus when other music and lyrics are repeated together. Since the nineteenth century, much of the study of Western classical music has been devoted to formal theory and analysis.

The promise of formalism as an account of music's value should be obvious to those familiar with canonical works of Western classical instrumental music. (I shall call such music, without accompanying words, program, film and so on, "pure" music.) This is music that seems to have a syntax but no semantics. That is, just as with ordinary language, we can tell whether or not a given musical event is a suitable continuation of a previous passage (a matter of syntax). For instance, in the key of C major, moving from a D-minor chord to a C-major chord would be a "syntactical" error akin to writing a "sentence" without a verb (e.g. "The quick brown fox the lazy dog"). In C major, a D-minor chord "needs to" move to the tonic (C major) via the dominant (G major) – it is a "pre-dominant" chord – just as that sentence obviously needs a verb. But unlike ordinary language, the elements of musical language do not mean anything (a matter of semantics). Our faulty sentence is clearly about two animals, even if we're not sure how they're related, but neither the C-major nor D-minor chords seem to refer to anything beyond themselves.

Formalism is the theory that accords value to syntax, thus it seems custom-made for instrumental music (whereas it faces obvious problems when it comes to representational arts such as painting and literature). A great work of music, according to this theory, is one that creates certain expectations in the ears of listeners by beginning a formal structure in a certain way, and then goes on to satisfy and frustrate those expectations in a complex manner by means of the continuation of the formal

structure in such a way that the listener is not driven away by too much frustration, yet is intrigued enough by the remaining expectations to keep listening until they are ultimately satisfied (Kivy 1990: 68–145).

This is the barest characterization of musical formalism, yet it is enough to raise some difficult questions for the formalist. First, even if formalism can be developed into a compelling theory of the value of instrumental Western classical music, this is but a small fraction of the world's (or even the West's) music. So it might be objected that this theory has only narrow application and is thus of little interest. One reply the formalist can give is that pure music is an interestingly difficult case for a theory of musical value. We may not think immediately of formalism when asked to explain the value of songs, film music, dance music and so on. Yet it may explain why we would not give up songs even with all the poetry in the world, or why a musical representation of a river cannot be replaced without loss by a film, painting or literary description of it. For perhaps formalism can explain the value contributed to these "impure" works by their purely musical aspects. And if this is granted, we can see the utility of thinking primarily about purely instrumental music when discussing the value of *all* music – pure or otherwise: instrumental music isolates musical features, enabling us to think more clearly about what they are and how they work, just as isolating chemical elements in a laboratory enables us to understand more easily what goes on in the messiness of the world outside the lab.

A second question is how formalism is supposed to explain the high value we place on purely instrumental musical works. That is, the formalist has pointed to complex features possessed by such works, but, as we saw with respect to emotional expressivity, one might still ask what reason we have to think such features are valuable. The formalist might give the same initial response: we *just do* value formal complexity, and if there is a further explanation to be given of this fact, it is psychological rather than philosophical (Kivy 2009: 205–13). Moreover, we especially value formal complexity skillfully produced by human beings, and thus displaying their (and thereby, in general, *our*) cognitive capacities (Davies 2002). (This kind of response could be applied to many sources of musical value, such as emotional expressivity, virtuosity and so on.)

This answer will be insufficient if it turns out there are artifacts as formally complex as the greatest purely musical works, yet which we do not value as highly. Candidates are bound to be controversial, but we might consider (actual or hypothetical) abstract visual artworks, such as arabesques or tapa cloths, and mathematical proofs – even chess moves (Davies 2002). Peter Kivy suggests that (again, for reasons beyond the scope of philosophy) hearing may be the faculty "most amenable to being pleased and intrigued by pure formal structure, in the absence of representational or semantic content" (2002: 263). Malcolm Budd points to the ability of music (as opposed to, say, mathematical proofs) to say something about formal features themselves, as when a movement seems to be a critique of, say, sonata form (Budd 1995: 164–71).

More philosophically profound justifications of formalism have been given which have roots in the work of Arthur Schopenhauer (Schopenhauer 2010: bk III). These theories turn the problem of the abstract nature of instrumental music on its head, arguing that music is valuable not *despite* but precisely *because of* its lack of relation

to the "real world." The idea is that in appreciating pure music we gain entry into a world where there is tension and struggle, but where this can be resolved in a completely satisfying way (unlike the typical case in the real world). Moreover, we enjoy the cognitive challenge of understanding the music's formal complexity, and while engrossed in the music we are temporarily lifted out of our everyday troubles (Goldman 1992; Kivy 1997: 179–217).

It may be that no one has ever been a "narrow formalist," denying the relevance of even such basic musical content as melodies, harmonies and rhythms – the elements that formal relationships hold *between* (Hamilton 2007: 87–89). But even "broad formalism," which acknowledges the musical importance of these elements, has recently been challenged by philosophers and musicologists in a number of ways. For instance, recent formalists have argued that the emotional content of a purely musical work can contribute to its formal structure (Kivy 2002: 88–101). More attention has also been paid to timbre, the least formal of basic musical features, especially in light of the expanded timbral possibilities of music constructed in the recording studio, such as (some have argued) rock or contemporary popular music (Gracyk 1996; Zak 2001).

A more radical challenge to traditional formalism is Jerrold Levinson's "concatenationism" (1997). Levinson argues that large-scale formal features, of the sort represented in a formal diagram (which have been the focus of most musicological theory and analysis) are much less important to understanding a piece of music than the relationships that hold between contiguous musical events, which can be simultaneously apprehended in the "mind's ear" in the moment. Ultimately, Levinson can be interpreted as offering an alternative formalist theory, albeit one that, like contemporary architectonic theories such as Kivy's, accords an important role to the emotional content of pure music. The fact that this attack on architectonicism might be taken as an attack on formalism shows how deeply traditional formalism itself is rooted in the assumptions Levinson questions.

Other issues

Like most philosophers of music, I have focused here on philosophical problems raised by thinking about purely instrumental music, or the purely musical aspects of other works. That is because these are arguably the most puzzling philosophical problems music raises. But the theories proposed as solutions to these problems have application beyond purely instrumental music. For to the extent that vocal, sacred or dance music, for instance, are musical, the same problems will arise, and the same kinds of solutions will likely suggest themselves.

There are also philosophical questions not touched on here regarding many aspects of music. There is a large literature on the ontology of musical works (the kinds of things they are and their relationships to performances and recordings). Some of this literature is on rather general, abstract issues (e.g. Dodd 2007), while some is very closely tied to particular musical traditions (e.g. Davies 2001). There are also many descriptive and normative issues concerning performance and recording, such as the nature and value of virtuosity, improvisation, authenticity and hearing

live performances vs. recordings. (For introductions to these issues, see respectively Mark 1980; Brown 2011; "Authenticity in performance," Chapter 44 of this volume; and Kania and Gracyk 2011.) There is no consensus on the nature of fundamental musical understanding, such as what it is to hear a melody as *rising* – moving through some kind of musical space (Scruton 1983; Budd 1985; Davies 2011). And there is growing interest in the relation of the philosophy of music to other disciplines that study music. Moreover, there is a rich history of answers to many of these questions stretching back to the ancient world. For introductions to these and other issues (which still only scratch the surface), see Gracyk and Kania (2011).

See also Idealism (Chapter 7), Nietzsche (Chapter 8), Formalism (Chapter 9), Expressivism (Chapter 11), Goodman (Chapter 18), Definitions of art (Chapter 21), Ontology of art (Chapter 23), The aesthetic (Chapter 24), Value of art (Chapter 28), Art, expression and emotion (Chapter 39), Authenticity in performance (Chapter 44), High art versus low art (Chapter 46).

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Further reading

Davies, S. (2012) "On Defining Music," *Monist* 95: 535–55. (Offers a taxonomy of different kinds of definition of music and an argument that a hybrid definition appealing to both structural and historical features is most promising.)
Gracyk, T. and Kania, A. (eds) (2011) *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music*, New York: Routledge. (The only reference work devoted to philosophy of music, containing fifty-six chapters on a wide range of topics, including general topics such as improvisation and recordings; various musical kinds, such as jazz and opera; important historical periods and figures; and related disciplines.)
Hamilton, A. (2007) *Aesthetics and Music*, New York: Continuum. (An idiosyncratic introduction to the philosophy of music, combining historical chapters with essays devoted to topics such as definition, rhythm, recordings and modernism.)
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62
DANCE

Graham McFee

The philosophical aesthetics of dance may be roughly characterized in three parts, each concerned centrally with dance *as an art form*; or with dances that are artworks. First, many issues are shared with philosophical aesthetics in general: for instance, concern over the role of the intentions of the artist for understanding his/her artworks recurs vis-à-vis choreographers – if with a characteristic dance "twist." Equally, commitments in general aesthetics will typically be replicated in dance aesthetics: for example, if one asserted the historical character of art (McFee 2011b: 119–45), a similar assertion for dance would be expected.

However, attention to dance *as an art* imports a contrast between the interest, appreciation, judgment, etc., appropriate to art and the interest, appreciation, judgment, etc., appropriate to the other things in which aesthetic interest is taken (natural beauty, fountains and firework displays, wallpaper, gymnastics) – a contrast between the *artistic* and the *aesthetic* (McFee 1992: 38–44; McFee 2011a: 14–20). Then artworks are appropriately perceived under artistic concepts, and misperceived if regarded as (merely) aesthetic – such that a term (say, "gaudy") applying on both sides of this contrast amounts to something different in the two cases.

In its second part, dance aesthetics shares issues with other performing arts (Thom 1993), whatever nuances dance introduces: the elaborated discussion of music provides the most fully articulated model in the literature – dance is a "Jenny-come-lately" to the aesthetic feast, trying to find its own elbow room.

Third, dance aesthetics has its own characteristic issues, although (as above) understanding them typically draws on discussions elsewhere in aesthetics, or perhaps in philosophy. The aesthetics of music is a prime source here, connecting the second and third aspects of the aesthetics of dance – those discussed here.

Many concerns derive from the nature of dance, or from what dances are. Like music, dance typically exists "at a perpetual vanishing point" (in Marcia Siegel's evocative expression; 1972: 1): the artworks are encountered only in the evanescence of performances (Croce 1982: 28–29; McFee 2011a: 263–66). But, unlike music, dance is essentially physical: confronting a dance is, minimally, confronting an assemblage of moving bodies – at least in typical cases. Not merely were dance works only concrete in the moment of performance but, since few dances of the past were either notated or recorded on film/video, they could be lost when the dancers who performed them left the company. As Agnes de Mille urges: "If a dancer leaves a group,

not only are his trained body and talent lost, but the knowledge and memory of the work itself. The masterpiece is ravaged: it goes with him" (1991: 330). Dance notation (for most philosophers, first seen in Goodman 1968: 125) unites these concerns. Again, discussion of dance assumes positions in general aesthetics: say, the plausibility of Nelson Goodman's constraints on notationality (Goodman 1968: 129–54). Further, acknowledging the essentially interpretative nature of such dance notation reintroduces the contrast, fundamental to any discussion of performing art, between *critics' interpretation* and *performers' interpretation* (McFee 1992: 103–4).

Since the concern here is centrally with the discussion of dance works that are art, the (possible?) connection of artistic value to educational value, as well as the history of dance studies within aesthetics, prompts an interest in the place or role of dance in education.

Dance identity: dance as multiple, performing, corporeal art

Dance works that are art are typically *performables*: they can be performed at different times and in different places. Thus, Martha Graham's *Lamentation* (1930), seen in New York on Tuesday, was also seen in London on Tuesday, and in New York on Wednesday. For dance (like music) is typically a multiple art, the very same dance works being *reperformable* on different occasions or in different location, despite the inevitable differences between such performances, and despite the dances themselves being concrete only at the "perpetual vanishing point" (Siegel 1972: 1) of such performances. So how should such (apparently) *numerical identity* judgments be made out?

With dance, as with music, there are at least two "objects of appreciation": the work itself and tonight's performance of it, potentially treated differently for critical purposes. Thus, the dance seen last night might be a wonderful performance of a mediocre work or (more likely) the opposite. Moreover, Monday's rehearsal may well count as rehearsing for the week's performances. So the central ontology is of *dance works* viewed as *performables* – such performables contrasting with "one-off" events such as happenings: centrally, a performable can be rehearsed; happenings cannot.

Some writers (Wollheim 1980 §§35–36; McFee 1992: 90–94; McFee 2011a: 56–68) locate a conceptual structure for discussion of such multiples in a type/token framework, with dance performances as *tokens* of an (abstract) *type*. Consider national flags: one recognizes both the *type* (for example, the Union Jack) and *tokens of the type* (a large Union Jack flying on Eastbourne town hall, small flags waved for the Queen on state visits). With ten people each given a national flag, there might be ten token-flags but three type-flags (Union Jack, Stars and Stripes, Tricolor), or ten token-flags and only one type-flag (all the Union Jack) and so on. Also, destroying all the big and little pieces of cloth, paper and plastic would not destroy the Union Jack *itself*. The flag itself (the *type*) is an abstract object, differentiated from any of its instantiations (the *tokens*).

The type/token contrast offers a way to treat multiple objects (like flags): the concrete object (the token) is contrasted with the abstract object (the type). As above, such a contrast treats dance performances as tokens of a dance-type: Tuesday's performance as one token of *Swan Lake*, Wednesday's as another.

But although the type/token contrast only has, as it were, two "slots," there seem more than two "objects of analysis": a *performer's interpretation* of a role or a dance is contrasted with the particular (his performance *tonight* of that work/interpretation) or with the general (the dance itself). So this sort of type/token account may need modification or clarification (Sharpe 1979; Meskin 1999: 46–47; McFee 2011a: 59–61).

Further, a type/token treatment fits at best awkwardly with recognition that each performance is *the very same artwork*, not merely one of the same kind – there is numerical identity here. In contrast, *numerical* identity (in contrast to qualitative identity) makes no sense in examples typically used to illustrate the type/token contrast (say, national flags or words). For example, the sentence "My cat ate your cat" employs five *token*-words and only four *type*-words, the word "cat" occurring twice. Someone *speaking* this sentence (utterance) or *writing* it (inscription) accordingly generates either two utterances or two inscriptions of the word "cat." But it seems odd to puzzle further if there are one or two *words*: both utterances/inscriptions of "cat" are tokens of the type-word. It makes no sense to ask whether the first and second occurrences of the word "cat" are *numerically identical* or *numerically distinct* words, although clearly different utterances or inscriptions. Yet just this contrast must make sense for dance performances: with only one dance work (say, *Swan Lake*) "in the offing," any performances of it instantiate *that very* artwork, despite differences between performances. But type/token language, well suited to discussion of words and flags, has no obvious way to accommodate this. Certainly, too much *professional* ontology looks unhelpful. As Drid Williams points out: "It is as though we are being asked, '*where* is, e.g. *Swan Lake*, when no one is performing it?' Otherwise sensible, rational people who would hoot at the question, 'where is spoken language when it is not being spoken?' … do not hesitate to ask this question about dancing" (2004: 72). But, of course, perhaps they should. For language is typically not ephemeral: is the dance case different? (Cf. Conroy 2012: 158–59.) Still, the question she raises should reinforce the decision to stress, as a starting point, aspects of dance *practice*.

Moreover, a *performer's interpretation* of a role or a dance contrasts sharply with *critic's* interpretation: the former refers to a distinctiveness of *how* this dancer performs, constituted simply by his/her performing in that way (even if the dancer also chooses to talk about it). Such interpretation is unique to the performing arts, constituted by actions: the performer's interpretation brings the artwork (the performance) into being – at least, into public being. Critics' interpretations, by contrast, amount roughly to strings of words said about artworks, and are a feature of all arts.

In recognizing the concreteness or specificity of dance, the very idea of a *performer's interpretation* highlights that a dance work is only encountered when encountering a *performance* of it; so always in some performer's interpretation or other. Further, the dance work itself is always *underdetermined*, relative to any of its particular performances, since each performance makes concrete in particular ways features of the dance which might have been concretized in other ways. But a dance work is only encountered in one such performance or another. (One might quibble about the status of, say, video recordings, but the moral is straightforward: if watching the video recording counts as watching the dance, it is a *performance*, albeit an indirect or recorded one. If, by contrast, watching the video recording does not count as watching the dance, it is slightly less than a performance; Sparshott 1995: 448–51.)

Dancers' actions, which (along with, say, music, costume and the like, where appropriate) bring the dance into being, might be regarded as the following of a *recipe* (Urmson 1976: 246), as "produc[ing] … those things … of which the witnessable work consists" (Urmson 1976: 243). Similar things might be said of any performing art. Yet here dance differs crucially from music. Musicians *produce* the sound: but dance movements *comprise* the dance (although in a context of music, etc.). Those movements (etc.) on that occasion really *do* comprise the dance; really do instantiate it. And nothing else would.

Importantly, much of the creation involved takes place in the rehearsal room. For learning to perform the dance work is often learning to perform it as *this* stager wants; and works themselves often get constructed in time set aside for "rehearsal." The account of dance – of the *nature* of dance – should reflect, for instance, that a lot of time goes into the rehearsal rooms, and a lot goes on there: often the *construction* of the piece, rather than dancers merely practicing it, although that distinction too is hard to draw abstractly or in every case. For the *idea* of a dance is not, yet, a dance: dances are inherently physical, at least in most cases. In a perceptive review, Renee Conroy (2008: 314b) urges that Sally Banes's work teaches us that philosophical reflection "can be productively and revealingly done with two bare feet planted firmly on the rosined floor of the dance studio." Implicitly, she contrasts that position favorably with a commitment to our armchairs and imaginations. But the bare foot in question is a *dancer's* foot; and audience's reactions are *to dance works* or *dance performances* – conceptualized to accommodate their connection to the art form.

So stressing the *bodily* or *corporeal* nature of dance might be a valuable counterbalance to undue emphasis (in the writing of some aestheticians) on insufficiently physical virtues of artworks. The point can also be overstressed; also, it can be poorly understood or poorly explained. For instance, Judith Hanna writes that "the instrument of dance and of sexuality is one – the human body" (1988: 13). Her thought is clearly that some of the value of the sexual would *thereby* accrues to dance. But this fact takes us nowhere: the same body for many activities, some meaning bearing, others not (cf. Sparshott 1988). However, it highlights the transformation of "ordinary" movements into dance; with the graceful sweeping movement of a road sweeper (for example) incorporated into a dance, a literal choreographer even retaining the broom (McFee 1992: 51; 2004 [1994]: 106; 2011a: 18). But that sequence of movement is no longer mere sweeping (however much resembling it): it has become dance. This is "the transfiguration of the 'ordinary' activity" (Danto 1981: 208) into dance. What is transfigured is (typically) *already* action, rather than mere movement (Carr 1987: 352). So, *insisting* that dance is "just movement" is a polemical answer (for a parallel with music, see Cavell 1969: 221).

Further, any sequence of movement *might* have had a place in dance. In this way, some dance poses directly the challenge of "confusable counterparts" (Danto 1981: 138), since these dance works in fact embody movement that might occur in contexts other than dance. Thus, Yvonne Rainer's *Room Service* (1963) has "two dancers are carrying a mattress up an aisle of the theatre, out one exit, and back through another" (Banes 1994: 11; see McFee 2011a: 16). Its being dance *transfigures* the movement. Hence, to perceive this event correctly – as part of a dance work – requires perception under artistic concepts. Moreover, in the transfiguration, the dance

becomes not just action that makes sense as *intended* (Best 1978: 138–41; McFee 1992: 243–44), but also more strongly meaning bearing: as intentionally *art*, with whatever character follows from that.

Elaborating the place of that *dance work* (as work of art), sketching the picture of *art*, and hence of some dance works as artworks, as it applies here, recognizes the intentional character of art: that, as a whole, these works embody (roughly) the intelligence of their creators. For, in typical artworks, (artistic) meaning here is embodied in this or that particular way (movement, sound and so on). Here, any property plausibly thought true of the dance – especially a "meaning property" – turns out to be intentional; or, at least, something the author accepted as serendipity. So discussing it *is* discussing the dance, discussing what the dance work *embodies*. Even when remarks seem to refer to artists' thoughts or achievements, they describe the intention-as-embodied – in that sense, descriptions *of the dance works*. Hence "what is meant" cannot ultimately be divorced from this embodiment – in contrast to, say, the report of a traffic accident, where the same meaning might occur expressed differently. This explains why similar or related artworks differ: their meaning, in being differently embodied, is a different meaning. Stressing in this way the *embodied* nature of artistic meaning (and artistic value) reaffirms its intentional character.

Dance, value and understanding

The "transfiguration" of movement patterns into dance works has crucial implications, reflected in dance aesthetics. First, different sets of qualities (or properties) are truthfully ascribed to the movement (etc.). In our "sweeping" example, the dance might be (for instance) *witty* in a way the mere sweeping could not be. Recognizing the dance work as *art* brings with it a vocabulary of the art critical, ascribing artistic properties to that movement sequence. These are arguably then *real* properties of the dances, despite requiring the suitably sensitive "recognizer." As noted initially, even when the same term (say, "graceful") ascribes properties to both artwork and "ordinary" movement, it amounts to something different in each case – roughly, one is the grace of *dance works*, in such-and-such a genre, and so on. Thus, recognition of the grace of the artwork appeals implicitly to the history and traditions of dance, in that genre, etc. (even when rejecting aspects of those traditions, etc.).

Second, this transfiguration brings kinds of *understanding* not available for mere sweeping: the causal mechanisms can (perhaps) be understood in both cases – but the dance involves something different to understand, a "something" picked out in speaking of the arts in terms of *communication*. For the dance is created or intended to be understood (should it attract a suitably knowledgeable audience): this recognition is integral to recognizing the dance as art (or the movement sequence as dance). At the least (as before), whatever follows about understandability from art status (if anything does) applies to dances also. For the special case of music, as Stephen Davies puts it: "I am not embarrassed to use the term 'meaning' here because I think both that music can and should be understood to be appreciated and that it is created to be so" (1994: ix). Something similar is true for dance. Whatever reservations here about the term "meaning" (Carr 1997), artworks differ from "real things" – and

especially aesthetically pleasing "real things" – in precisely this dimension: thinking otherwise *reduces* art, treating artworks as merely aesthetically pleasing (or perhaps aesthetically relevant) "real things." In our case, it would dissolve the conceptual difference between the dance and the (mere) sweeping.

Third, that movement sequence's art status (associated with its meaning-bearing character) connects with the dance's *value*. So, the transfiguration into dance brings not merely a critical vocabulary, reflecting what (following Davies) we call "meaning," but also value (of a nonmonetary sort). Any argument for that movement sequence's art status is simultaneously an argument for its value; and such an argument refers (perhaps implicitly) to the past of the art of dance. For art status involves locating this dance work both in the history of dance (of this kind) and in "the lay of the artworld" (Carroll 2001: 91). This work too is treated as valuable *because* it is dance – which means regarding it in ways one (appropriately) regards other dance works. Further, the value that attaches to dance as art may also be crucial in justifying dance's educational role (McFee 2004 [1994]: 55–56).

Should such artistic value be justifiable or explicable to those who do not understand it? This seems a tall order. As with most art forms, the fact and the nature of the value of dance is taken for granted by most who discuss such matters: as Roger Scruton writes (of literary discussions, but the point holds): "in the nature of things, the arguments of a critic are addressed only to those who have sufficient reverence for literature; for only they will see the point of detailed study and moral investigation" (1998: 20). And this is true of the writing of the aesthetician too. So the value of art is sometimes not a live issue.

Dance notation and understanding

The example of music suggests that notating those dances allows dance-work identification and reidentification. In the past, numerous attempts were made to construct a system of graphic recording which recorded all that dancers and choreographers required. But no version successfully captures all the key features of dances.

Current dance notation is essentially movement notation, at best accurately recording movements of the body (and, by combination, of more bodies). Three well-developed notation systems (Labanotation, Benesh, Eshkol Wachman) are used for dance, as well as by anthropologists studying movement more generally; and in addition Eshkol Wachman is used to predict the motion of "space walkers" in extravehicular activity. Some notation systems lend themselves to the characteristics of dance styles (the "flatness" and assumed position of the viewer in Benesh notation make it especially suitable for classical ballet, through a proscenium arch). But nothing in the movements themselves *guarantees* that a *dance* is recorded – the (un)likelihood of a line of people on *pointe* being anything other than dance not withstanding. Still, notation cannot *guarantee* that the movement sequence notated is dance (and not some other activity). Yet anthropologists interested in movement patterns find this a strength of such notated scores – whether such and such is *dance* will be beside the point for them, if their interest is restricted to the movement patterns employed.

So, recognizing that such and such is dance is already a kind of *interpretation* of it. As Suzanne Youngerman puts it: "Notation systems are more than tools for documentation; they are systems of analysis that can be used to illuminate many aspects of the phenomenon of movement. Notation scores embody perceptions of movement" (1984: 101). Thus, notation systems instantiate methods of analysis or conceptualization, rather than neutrally describing movements *then* analyzed. In part, this follows from conceptualizing four-dimensional human activity in the two dimensions of a notated score, with different notation systems finding different resolutions. That a notator divides movement up in this way, rather than that, follows from using (say) Labanotation – where the temporal dimension is on the page – rather than Benesh notation, which treats time symbolically. Further, notations are interpretative in embodying choices: inscribing the motion pattern of hand, forearm, elbow, upper arm, etc., could notate the movement of a person's arm. But given the connections ("the forearm bone connected to the elbow bone"), it may be sufficient to notate the movement of the elbow. Yet this is a decision which another notator might make differently. Still, someone wishing to stage that dance must pay attention to precisely what is notated (and, by implication, less attention to what is not): so, to the elbow movements in the case above. Hence the notator is required to recognize what is central, what peripheral, to this sequence.

Judgment might be required in other ways too. The renowned notator Ann Hutchinson-Guest reported being asked to notate a segment of a dance which the choreographer demonstrated by shuffling across the stage. The dancers, reflecting years of ballet training, could not bring themselves to shuffle: so they actually performed a sequence of classic ballet steps (*chassé*, *chassé*, *pas de bourrée*). Should Hutchinson-Guest notate what this group of dancers (and, predictably, future generations of ballet dancers) *did* perform, or what they *should* perform (to "obey" the choreographer)? No answer avoids dependence on the informed *judgment* of the notator.

Equally, faced with a score in dance notation he/she understands, what characteristics will a dancer take as central, such that movements (etc.) failing to satisfy them preclude having instantiated that dance? Or what notated features reflect *typical* if inessential aspects of the dance? One hundred percent compliance with any score cannot be expected as a dancer's goal, much less as a realistic expectation of typical performances. (Although Goodman does expect "full compliance," urging that a musical performance where one note played is not reflected in the score fails as a performance of that work; 1968: 187.) But a poor performance of a work is still a performance of that work – perhaps, until it gets just too bad; and not all performances of less than full compliance are poor. In a music example, pianist Glenn Gould produced powerful, expressive performances of Schoenberg's piano music (some of which are "captured" in recordings) – but his performances are often further from the score than less powerful renditions.

Dance notation and dance identity

As with most performing arts, creating a dance work requires either making an initial performance or creating a score, as a composer could make a work for solo

piano either at the keyboard or through writing a score. Most dances are created by arranging the initial performance; further, at least today, most dances are never notated. But the possibility of notation (the notationality) is conceptually revealing. So our interest parallels that for musical works, where the notation functions as a "marker" of authenticity: that a dance conforming to this notation is indeed such-and-such a dance (say, *Lamentation*).

With a dance composed by writing a score, any dance performance conforming to the score, and appropriately seen as dance, instantiates that artwork. Hence, there is a normativity in the score: as above, to stage that dance attention must be paid to precisely what is notated (and, by implication, less attention to what is not). For, in creating a recipe, one implicitly specifies *which* of its features are crucial, such that movements (etc.) failing to satisfy them preclude having instantiated that dance.

By contrast, creating the dance work (the abstract object) by creating a "first performance" leaves open which of this particular dance performance's features are crucial for other dances if they are to instantiate that dance work. Thus, sorting out identity-matters for performing arts will be facilitated if artworks within those arts are (or anyway can be) created by making recipes or mechanisms; that is, scores. This conclusion cannot threaten dance more than its parallel would music – where it is a commonplace.

So dance's notationality remains important despite most dances presently lacking notated scores: some just *are* not notated, some (perhaps) could not be. But when there was no established system of notation, and hence no "texts" recognized as authoritative by those knowledgeable about dance, dances were (still) abstract objects, still in principle notatable even without appropriate notation systems. Today, having such systems, dances can readily be imagined as *in principle* notatable. In thus emphasizing notationality, one emphasizes the connection between the nature of dances and the character of scores.

Above, the appeal to notation reflects something like Goodman's principle – that two dance performances both satisfying a particular notation are performances of the same work, and performances failing to instantiate that notated score are not of the work under discussion (subject to the qualifications above) – with the greater weight given to the negative judgment. This way of establishing the identity of a dance from two performances also depends on both the particular notation used (when, if ever, are two scores equivalent?) and the competence of the judges.

In typical cases, dance and music differ in thus emphasizing the particular notation: there is more than one dance (movement) notation, in ways there is not for music; and, to date, dance notation lacks the prominence within the dance world that musical notation has in its world. Musicians typically understand notation – indeed, in some spheres, one must read musical scores to be taken seriously as a musician (for jazz, this requirement is not strict). But the requirement that dancers or choreographers understand dance scores is nothing like as strong – even a choreographer who was master of one notation system could not reliably read or perform another.

Practicality is a relevant consideration (Goodman 1968: 129–54, 211–18): ideally, scores should be easily "read" and easily (and clearly) "written." So that asking "Who can read what?" is partly a conceptual, partly a practical, matter. The potential

usefulness for dance of notated scores, for purposes both of authenticity and preservation, requires notations both readable and reliable. (And, of course, dancers trained to instantiate those scores; Challis 1999: 148–50.)

Dance, value and the educational

The educational role of dance (especially its role in formal education) has been an abiding concern in writing in the UK since the work of early twentieth-century theorists (such as Rudolf Laban) was appropriated by the UK's educational establishment. (The same has not been true in the USA, for example.) But, since key topics for education concern the value of dance, some of the questions posed are fundamental: and they are insistent questions, given pressure on curriculum time and the possibility of aesthetically motivated physical activities other than dance (such as gymnastics or diving; see Best 1978: 104–7 on "aesthetic sports"). If dance were no more than physical conditioning with an aesthetic dimension and a social benefit, no justification offered for it could supersede, say, a justification for gymnastics. So some more fundamental contrast must be sought, one sustaining an educational role for dance.

A feature of dance not shared with these other physical activities is its art status. Could this explain its educational value? Perhaps a general account of the value of the arts might stress conceptual changes which art appreciation might bring about, understanding this as a kind of emotional education (McFee 2004 [1994]: 40–41; 1992: 168–70). But how do the conceptual changes thus initiated bear on human concerns? "Education" here is more than simply an induction into knowledge *about* the art form: in this case, more than dance history, dance anthropology, dance sociology or whatever. What is required, instead, is genuine artistic knowledge.

Such knowledge or understanding is essentially practical, embedded in performances and their appreciation. So, if such a conception can be sustained, its recognition will have general implications, at least for the epistemology of aesthetics and of education (McFee 1998). But it also bears on how artistic value is understood: the *obviously* recognitional character of such value (if it were granted) might suggest a conception compatible with a view of value as open to perception, such that there are reasons recognized in the exercise of artistic judgment. Granting artistic value here may lead to a decontextualization (or reassessment) of valuing in general.

Conclusion

The distinctiveness of the aesthetics of dance, which supports the need to treat dance examples case by case, does not preclude importing insights from other aspects of philosophical aesthetics; this follows from the relation of the aesthetics of dance to aesthetics more generally. Again, in this way, topics distinctive of the aesthetics of dance – some of those introduced here – suggest both characteristic issues for the aesthetician and questions that might shed light on other matters.

See also Value of art (Chapter 28), Interpretation (Chapter 30), Theater (Chapter 52).

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INDEX

Aarseth, Espen 568
Abelard, Peter 31
Abell, Catharine 362–71
"Absolute, the" (Hegel) 418–19
abstraction 602
accidental counterpart, photography 592
achievement 445
Achilles among the Daughters of Lycomedes (Poussin) 88
Ackerman, J. S. 450
acoustic definition of authenticity 455–56, 459
acting 547–48, 549–50; and audience 550–51; spaces of performance 551–52; *see also* theater
Acts of the Apostles 28, 59
Adagio for Strings (Barber) 289
adaptation 281–82, 283–84, 286–89
"adherent beauty" (Kant) 623
adjectives, attributive/predicative 196–97
Adorno, Gretel 148, 155–56
Adorno, Theodor 137–46, 148, 149, 153, 155, 554
Aeschylus 122
Aesthetica (Baumgarten) 502
"Aesthetic Concepts" (Sibley) 190–98, 254
aesthetic contemplation 249–51
aesthetic disposition 477
"aesthetic emotion" (Bell) 599
aesthetic pleasure 107, 194, 247, 264, 273, 281–83, 285, 292, 304, 620
aestheticism 291–94, 295, 395–97, 627, 630; *see also* autonomism
Aesthetics and Architecture (Winters) 628
Aesthetics and Psychology (Berlyne) 270
"Aesthetics and the Look of Things" (Sibley) 198
aesthetics of existence (Foucault) 167–68
Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism (Beardsley) 179, 487, 532
Aesthetic Theory (Adorno) 137
After the End of Art (Danto) 515
Agamben, Giorgio 148
Aiello, Danny 561–62
Alberti, Leon Battista 300, 630
Albert the Great 33
Alcuin of York 29–30
Aldrich, Virgil 357
Alexander, Thomas 102
Alexander of Hales 32
algorithms, videogames 570–71
Alice in Wonderland (Tenniel) 582
alief (Gendler) 321
Alison, Archibald 624
allegory 32
allographic arts 185–86, 236, 467–68
Alward, Peter 590
Amadeus (Schaffer) 433
Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra 453
"Analytic Language of John Wilkinson, The" (Borges) 163–64
Andersson, Harriet 561
Andrew, Dudley 558
Angelus Novus (Klee) 156
Anna Karenina (Tolstoy) 184
Annapurna (Ichac) 557
anomaly 429–30
antiaesthetics (Benjamin) 153–55
antiessentialism (Adorno) 140–42
Antigone (Sophocles) 56, 59, 419, 420
Antoni, Janine, *Gnaw* 609
Apollonian principle (Nietzsche) 78, 422, 516–17, 518
appearance/reality distinction 78, 79
appearance theory 462–63
Appleton, Jay 282, 488
appreciation: architecture 631–32; sculpture 607, 610–12; videogames 571–73
Aquinas, Thomas 27, 30, 33–34
Arcades Project, The (Benjamin) 149, 150, 155
Archaeology of Knowledge, The (Foucault) 166

architecture 60, 69, 627–37; religious 509, 511–12
Arendt, Hannah 126, 148
Aristotle 13–24, 26, 29, 33, 88, 268–69, 270, 294; on beauty 20–21; on catharsis 14–17, 21, 337–38, 417, 418; on emotions 14–17; on fear 14–17, 418; on imagery 322; on metaphor 351; on mimesis 6, 17–19, 268–69, 415, 416–17, 418, 426; on pity 14–17, 418; on plot 18–19; on poetry 13–22, 336, 380, 526, 533–34; on politics 20, 21–22; on seriousness 19–20; on theater 545; on tragedy 416–18, 421
Arnheim, Rudolf 557, 559, 579, 589; *Film als Kunst* 555–56
arousal theories 270, 271, 410–11, 642
Art (Bell) 87
Art and Imagination (Scruton) 410–11
Art and Its Objects (Wollheim) 179, 202
Art and Philosophy: Readings in Aesthetics (Kennick, ed.) 487
Art as Experience (Dewey) 96, 97
artifactual kinds 224–25
"artistic acts" 405
"Artwork" (Benjamin) 154
artworlds 118, 123, 202, 215–16, 217–18, 220
"aspects of experience" (Wollheim) 204
Atencia-Linares, Paloma 590
Atget, Eugène 152
attitude theories 249–51, 503–4
attributive/predicative adjectives 196–97
Augustine 26, 28–29, 32, 34
aura 148, 152–53, 155
authenticity: historical 452–53, 469–70; in music 452–61
"Author as Producer, The" (Benjamin) 150
authorship 166–67, 561–62; *see also* writing
"autographic arts" 185–86, 236, 466–68
automorphic representation 557
autonomism 395–97
autonomy: Adorno 138, 139, 140–42, 143–44; Benjamin 153–54
Avicenna 27

Babbitt, Milton 481
Bach, Johann Sebastian 452, 516–17; *Goldberg Variations* 457
Bacon, Francis 296
bad taste 262–64
Baker, Lynne Rudder 612
Bakhtin, Mikhail 164
Balanchine, George 89
Ballantyne, Andrew 3–12, 636–37
ballet 88, 89
Banes, Sally 652
Banner, Fiona 232
Barber, Samuel, Adagio for Strings 289
Barnes, Albert C. 97
Bartel, Christopher 236
Barthes, Roland 167, 585, 628
Barzun, Jacques 515
"basic and minimal" account of expression 412–13
Basil the Great 26, 27
Bataille, Georges 150, 166
Batteux, Charles 474, 475
Baudelaire, Charles 155
Baudrillard, Jean 163, 171
Bauhaus 618
Baumgarten, Alexander 135; *Aesthetica* 502
Bazin, André 557–58, 559, 585
Beardsley, Monroe 8, 102, 194–95, 226, 249, 251–53, 292, 395, 396, 522–23, 540
Beardsmore, Richard 294, 400
Beatles, "Can't Buy Me Love" 641
beauty 299–306, 603; Alcuin of York on 29–30; Aquinas on 33–34; Aristotle on 20–21; Erigena on 30; Hegel on 7, 56, 61, 419; Hume on 247–48; Hutcheson on 37–40; Kant on 46–55, 56, 61, 248–49, 304, 433–34, 623, 635–36; as light 26–27, 28, 29, 31, 32–33; Plato on 7–8; pleasure in 46–50, 304–5; Plotinus on 27
Bechdel, Alison, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* 576
Beckett, Samuel 145
Beethoven, Ludwig van 139, 456
Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology (Sartre) 128, 130, 132, 161
Being and Time (Heidegger) 116–17, 120, 132
being/beings distinction (Heidegger) 118–19
belief 320–21, 323, 327–28, 332
Bell, Clive 87–97, 93, 250, 251–53, 267, 292, 396, 462–63, 486, 599
Bellini, Giovanni, *Doge of Venice* 204; *The Madonna of the Meadow* 470
Benjamin, Walter 139, 142, 148–56, 557, 585
Benton, Thomas Hart 101
Berger, John, *Ways of Seeing* 504–5
Bergman, Ingmar 561
Berleant, A. 489, 492
Bernhardt, Sarah 544
Bernstein, Charles 156
Berrios, Ruben 77–85
Bicycle Wheel (Duchamp) 609
Binkley, Timothy 227
biophilia hypothesis 436
BioShock 566, 567–68

Birth of Tragedy, The (Nietzsche) 10, 21–22, 69, 77–79, 122, 167–68, 421–22, 516
Black, Max 353
Blackmur, R. P. 527
Blake, William, "The sick rose" 309–10, 311–12, 315–16
Blanchot, Maurice 166
Bleak House (Dickens) 345
Boden, Margaret A. 432–40
body, the 620; and sculpture 610–12; *see also* dance; theater
Boethius 29
Böhme, Jakob 73
Bonaventure 32–33
Booth, Wayne 397
Bordwell, David 558, 559
Borges, Jorge Luis 163–64
Borromini, *San Carlo alle Quattrofontane* 631
Bosanquet, Bernard 263–64
Bourdieu, Pierre 263–64, 475
Bradley, A. C. 537–38, 539
Brady, E. 489, 492
Branigan, Edward 558
Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&!* (Spiegelman) 579
Brecht, Bertolt 150, 152, 154
Brent, J. 96
Brentano, Franz 126
Breton, André 270
Brideshead Revisited (Waugh) 292, 295, 297
Brillo Boxes (Warhol) 123, 253
Broadway Boogie-Woogie (Mondrian) 184, 444
Brooks, Cleanth 522, 527, 536
Bruno, Giordano 302
Buckingham Palace 280–81
Budd, Malcolm 195, 204, 208, 289, 290, 291, 304, 406, 412–13, 539, 645
Bull, Stephen 586
Bullough, Edward 250, 486, 503–4
Burke, Edmund 624

Cage, John 89, 93, 143, 640
"caged skylark, The" (Hopkins) 540
Cameron, Ross 242
Camus, Albert, *The Myth of Sisyphus* 168
"Can't Buy Me Love" (Beatles) 641
Cantos (Pound) 395
Carlson, Allen 485–93
Carney, James D. 217
Carpenter, Rhys 610
Carroll, Noël 219, 279, 280, 295, 343–44, 390, 479, 480, 489, 577, 588; on film 558, 559–60, 562; on formalism 87–94; on videogames 567–68, 570–71
Cartier-Bresson, Henri 589
categories of art 224–33
catharsis: Aristotle on 14–17, 21, 337–38; Plato on 15–16
causation, and narrative 343–44
Cavell, Stanley 103, 391, 423, 558, 560
Cervantes, Miguel de, *Don Quixote* 163, 443
Cézanne, Paul 123, 357
"Cézanne's Doubt" (Merleau-Ponty) 134
Chambers, William 630
Chaplin, Adrienne Dengerink 126–35
Chapman, James Watkins 171
Charlemagne 29
Chaucer, Geoffrey 29
Chénier, André 270
Christian art 59–60, 61
Christianity 25–26, 59, 83–84, 509
Churchill, Winston 521
Cicero 28
Classical tragedy 419–23
classicism, architecture 630
classics 481–82
Classics Illustrated 582
Clement of Alexandria 26–27
Cloud Gate (Kapoor) 611
cluster theory or art 214, 475–76, 478
cognition 48, 50
cognitive technologies 437–38
cognitivism 102, 141, 294–97, 399, 400, 435; and environmental aesthetics 490–92; fakes/forgeries 465; and knowledge 295–97, 389–90; literature 337–38
Cohen, J. 591
Cohen, Ted 195, 473
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor 438
Collingwood, R. G. 109–14, 117, 130, 434, 517–18
colors, Sibley on 191–94
Coltrane, John 145
combinational creativity 438
comics 575–82
commitment (Sartre) 130–31
common denominator argument 89–91, 92–93
common property argument 475
common sense 50
Community 478
completeness 513–14
concept-dependent theories 306
conceptual art 293, 516
Confessions (Augustine) 28, 29
Congrés Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) 633–34
Conroy, Renee 652
Consolation of Philosophy (Boethius) 29

Constantine, Emperor 25–26
constitutive account of expression 407–8
consumer goods 617–18, 619–24
content theory of style 447–48
contextualism 141–42, 395, 397–99, 401, 465
conventionalism, interpretation 315–16
conversational implicatures 370–71
Cook, Roy 580, 582
correctness, and depiction 367–71
Cosimo de Medici 27
Costello, D. 586
craft, art as 294–97, 436
Crawford, Donal W. 46–55
creation, and metaphor 353–54
creativity 321, 432–40
Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, The (Husserl) 132
criticism 274, 375–82, 397
Critique of Judgement (Kant) 66, 68, 433, 502–3, 506
Critique of Pure Reason (Kant) 52, 161
Critique of the Power of Judgment (Kant) 46–55, 249, 510–13
Croce, Benedetto 106–8, 130, 195, 197
Crumb, Robert 576
Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly 437
culture industry 143–45
Currie, Gregory 240–41, 320–28, 331–32, 335, 344, 557, 558, 588, 589–90, 591

dance 88, 227, 544, 649–57
Dante 29, 32, 292
Danto, Arthur 10, 63, 117, 123, 141–42, 253–54, 271–72, 303, 346–47, 449, 515, 576, 593; definitions of art; 216, 218–19, on design 616, 617; fakes/forgeries 466, 468–69, 470–71
Darwin, Charles 436
Davidson, Donald 354–55, 357
Davies, David 224–33, 235, 237, 240–41, 387, 544, 560, 589
Davies, Stephen 213–20, 239, 313, 407–8, 453, 456, 459, 623, 643
De administratione (Suger) 31
De Clercq, Rafael 299–306
De divisione naturae (Erigena) 30
defamiliarization (Shklovsky) 559
definitions of art 213–20
deflationism 242–43
deities 58, 63, 444, 516
delicacy 42
de Mille, Agnes 649–50
Demoiselles d'Avignon, Les (Picasso) 439
depiction 202–4, 362–71; resemblance theories 364–65, 367, 369–71, 408, 412–13; *see also* representation
De rerum natura (Lucretius) 540
Derrida, Jacques 119, 148, 163, 167, 171
design 616–24
detachment 396
Dewey, John 96–103, 97
Dialectic of Enlightenment (Adorno, Horkheimer) 144
Dialogues (Rousseau) 165
Dick, Philip K., *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* 579–80
Dickens, Charles, *Bleak House* 345
Dickie, George 123, 215, 220, 246, 250–51, 252
Didascalicon (Hugh of St Victor) 32
Dido and Aeneas (Purcell) 184
difference 163
Dionysian principle (Nietzsche) 78, 422, 516–17, 518
Dionysius the Areopagite *see* Pseudo-Dionysius
Discourses (Viollet-le-Duc) 633
disinterestedness 30, 46–50, 396, 477, 485–86, 503–4, 567, 620
display 570
display theory of acting 548
Dissanayake, Ellen 272–73
divine creativity 433
Divine Names (Pseudo-Dionysius) 28, 32, 33
Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (Dick) 579–80
Docks of New York, The (von Steinberg) 556
Doctor Faustus: Dialectic of Enlightenment (Mann, Horkheimer) 137, 139
"documentary authority", photography 592
Dodd, Julian 239, 240, 241, 243
Doge of Venice (Bellini) 204
Don Carlos (Schiller) 70
Don Giovanni (Mozart) 456
Donne, John 527
Donougho, Martin 148–56
Don Quixote (Cervantes) 163, 443
Don Quixote (Menard) 443
Do the Right Thing 561–62
double-aspect accounts, painting 600–602
drama 1–2, 598; *see also* acting; theater
Duchamp, Marcel 91, 123, 216, 293, 434, 468, 616; *In Advance of the Broken Arm* 606, 607–8, 612; *Bicycle Wheel* 609; *Fountain* 230, 284, 291, 577
Dutton, Dennis 267–75, 282, 545

"Earliest System-Programme of German Idealism, The" (Hegel) 56
Early Music America 453
early music movement 452, 453, 454, 459
Ebert, Roger 566–67
Eco, Umberto 628
ecological aesthetics 492
Edison, Thomas 554
Edman, Irwin 101
education 3–4, 58, 71–72, 145, 657
Eisenstein, Sergei 555, 557, 559
Elective Affinities (Goethe) 154
Elements of Semiology (Barthes) 628
eliminativist theory 479
Eliot, T. S. 527
elitism 481
Emerson, Ralph Waldo 96, 97, 98–99, 100, 101, 103
Emin, Tracey 434, 616; *My Bed* 609
emotions 108–9, 111–14, 404–13; Aristotle on 14–17; and fiction 337–38; and imagination 323–25; and knowledge 388–89; Plato on 15
empathy 324–25
empiricism 36–45, 291
Empson, William 522
Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical (Hegel) 57
end-of-art thesis (Hegel) 60–63
engagement 139–40, 142–44, 146, 219, 224, 228, 230, 289–90, 324–27, 338, 367, 378–400, 382, 388–89, 396, 489, 516, 518, 569–70, 639; high/low art distinction 476–77, 480, 482, 486, 488, 489–90, 491, 492, 493
Enlightenment 170–71
Enneads (Plotinus) 26
environmental aesthetics 485–93
equipmentality 120
Equus (Schaffer) 237
Erigena, Johannes Scotus 30
Ernie Elton: The Lazy Boy 292
Essay on Man (Pope) 533–34, 540
essentialism, feminism 499–501
Ethical Function of Architecture, The (Harries) 630
ethics 79–82, 394–402
Euclid 39
evaluation *see* value/valuation of art
evaluation/interpretation debate 174–77
event-types 240–41
evolutionary theory of art 278–87, 436
exemplification (Goodman) 182–83
existence 79
existentialism (Sartre) 127–28, 131
expectation, theater 548
experience 539; Beardsley on 251–53; Bell on 251–53; Benjamin on 151–53; Dewey on 96, 97, 101; Wollheim on 204
Experience and Nature (Dewey) 97
expertise 273
explanatory notion, style as 446–47
exploratory creativity 438–39
expression 109–14, 183–84, 187–88, 204–5, 404–13, 641–44
"expression thesis" (Kemp) 114
expressivism 106–14
"Eye and Mind" (Merleau-Ponty) 135
Eysenck, Hans 435

fakes/forgeries 462–71; appearance theory 462–63; Danto on 466, 468–69, 470–71; Goodman on 185–86, 187, 236, 466–68; music 467
fear, Aristotle on 14–17, 418
feminism 499–507; male gaze 504–6
Ferneyhough, Brian 156
Fichte, Johann Gottlieb 71, 73, 74, 154, 636
Ficino, Marsilio 27
fiction: and emotions 337–38; and film 562; and genre 332–33; and imagination 323–25, 331, 333; and literature 330–38, 522, 524–26l; and meaning 336; and narrative 340–41; pictures 333; truth in 333–37
film 6, 90–91, 324, 478, 554–63; and comics 581–82; feminism 505; fiction and nonfiction 562
Film als Kunst (Arnheim) 555–56
film-as-philosophy (FAP) thesis 560–63
fine art 53–54, 88–89
Fish, Stanley 103
Fisher, John A. 473–83
Flory, D. 560
forgeries *see* fakes/forgeries
formalism 87–94, 141, 396, 397, 432, 460, 463, 486, 556, 599–600, 603, 644–46
form-content unity, poetry 537–38
Forms, theory of (Plato) 5, 7–8, 27, 68, 432
form theory of style 447–48
Foucault, Michel 159–68; on authorship 166–67; on Borges 163–64; on language 163–64; on *Las Meninas* 160–61; on painting 160–63; on self 164–67; on *This is Not a Pipe* 162–63, 166
Fountain (Duchamp) 230, 284, 291, 577
"free beauty" (Kant) 52–53, 623
freedom 70, 74, 130–31, 430
French Revolution 72
Freud, Sigmund 139, 356, 428, 437–38

Fried, Michael 207
Friedrich, Caspar David 284
Friend, Stacie 332–33
Fry, Roger 462, 599–600
functionalism 215–16, 220, 622–24, 632–34
function in architecture 634–37
function of art 85, 90–93, 98, 122–23, 477–78
Fundamentals of Music (Boethius) 29
Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic (Bechdel) 576
Futurist theater 543–44

Galerius, Emperor 25–26
Gallery of indiscernibles (Danto) 468, 470–71
Gardner, Howard 435
Gaut, Berys 296, 386, 388–89, 390, 394–402, 475, 561–62, 567, 569, 571–72
Gay Science, The (Nietzsche) 78–79
Geach, Peter 196–97
Gendler, T. S. 321
genetic/cultural co-evolution 279–81
genius 53–54, 68–69, 512–13
Genius of Design, The 622
Gertrude Stein (Picasso) 597
Gibson, John 333, 390
Gilmore, Jonathan 375–82
Gnaw (Antoni) 609
God 26, 60, 71, 74, 83–84, 170, 433
Godlovitch, S. 489
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 71, 73, 151, 556
Goldberg Variations (Bach) 457
Golding, William, *Lord of the Flies* 295
Goldman, Alan 254, 291, 301, 482–83
Gombrich, Ernst 129, 184, 203, 282, 445, 600
Gonzales-Torres, Felix 612, 613
Goodman, Nelson 102, 103, 179–88, 236, 240, 389, 448, 449, 609; aesthetic theory 254–55; architectural meaning 629, 632; on depiction 363, 368; fakes/forgeries 185–86, 187, 236, 466–68; on music 183–84; on notationality 650, 655, 656; on ontology 185–86; on painting 184, 391; on representation 187–88; on style 443
good sense 42
good taste 262–64
Gorgias (Plato) 9
Gothic 31
Gould, Glenn 655
Goya 356–57
Gracyk, Theodore 137–46, 475, 480
Graham, Gordon 106–14, 297, 509–18, 634–35
Graham, Martha, *Lamentation* 650
Grand Theft Auto IV 572
Greek art 58–61, 62–63, 121, 122, 516–17
Greek tragedy 421–23
Greenberg, Clement 87, 207, 380
Greene, Graham, *The Third Man* 333
Greenough, Horatio 617
Gregory the Great 31
Grice, H. P. 369–70
Gropius, Walter 634
Grosseteste, Robert 32
Guernica (Picasso) 131, 141, 229–30, 396, 443
gustatory taste 261–62
Guyer, Paul 635, 637

Hagberg, Garry L. 351–59
Haldane, John 25–34
hamartia (Aristotle) 19–20
Hamilton, Andy 481–82, 640
Hamilton, James R. 543–52
Handel, George Frideric 458
Hanna, Judith 652
Hansen, Miriam 153
Hanslick, Eduard 87
Hanson, Karen 499–507
"Happening" (Kaprow) 102
Harlem Renaissance 97
Harries, Karsten 630
Harrison, B. 297
Harvey, Robert 582
Haskins, Casey 102
Hausman, Carl 357
Hayman, Greg 580
Haynes, Bruce 453
Hebrew Bible 26, 27
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 55, 56–63, 74, 116, 122, 139, 165, 171, 636; the artifactual 486; on beauty 7, 56, 61, 419; end-of-art thesis 60–63; on mind 57–60, 62, 63; on religion 59–60; on religious art 513–15; on tragedy 418–20, 421
Heidegger, Martin 63, 116–24, 126, 138, 143, 560; being/beings distinction 118–19; on *Pair of Shoes* 119–20; on poetry 122–23
Hepburn, Ronald 487–88, 489, 490
Hepworth, Barbara 606
Herder, Gottfried 610, 611
Hessel, Franz 150
high/low art distinction 144, 173, 217–18, 272, 294, 295, 445, 473–83, 488, 489–90, 491, 492, 493

Hildebrand, Adolf von 610
Hippias Major (Plato) 7, 8
Hirsch, E. D. 527–28
Hirst, Damien 434, 596, 616
Hirstein, W. 282
historical definitions of art 216–18
historically informed performance (HIP) 452–53
historicism 123
history 121–22
History and Class Consciousness (Lukács) 149
Hobbes, Thomas 171, 352–53, 427, 429
Hofmannstahl, Hugo von 149
Hölderlin, Friedrich 56, 122
holism 118, 123
Homer 4, 6, 9, 10
Homilia in Hexaem (Basil the Great) 27
Hopkins, Gerard Manley, "The caged skylark" 540
Hopkins, Robert 204, 366, 369, 608, 610, 612
Horace 540
Horkheimer, Max 150, 155
Hospers, John 108
Hugh of St Victor 32
Human, All Too Human (Nietzsche) 69, 78, 515
humanism 527
human nature 279–81
Hume, David 291, 529; on beauty 247–48; on ethics 401; in imagining 325; on taste 40–44, 259–60, 262, 269, 280, 305, 380, 506; on tragedy 416, 417
humor 425–30, 478
Huovinen, E. 482
Husserl, Edmund 116, 126–27, 131–32
Hutcheson, Francis 20, 37–40, 247, 506
Hutchinson-Guest, Ann 655
hybrid definitions of art 218–20, 232
Hyman, Lawrence 397
Hypercomics: The Shapes of Comics to Come 576–77
hyperintentionality 537

Ichac, Marcel, *Annapurna* 557
Ichino, Anna 320–28
iconography 31, 511–12
idealism 66–74
identification of art 375–76, 442–43
identity theory 73–74
Iliad (Homer) 4
imagery 321–22, 323–25; Aristotle on 322; Plotinus on 27; *see also* iconography; imagination; mimesis
images 151–52
Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination, The (Sartre) 128–30
imagination 110, 274, 320–28, 331, 386–88; and emotion 323–25; and expression 408–10; and fiction 323–25, 331, 333; Hegel on 56, 60, 62; Sartre on 128–29
imaginative resistance 325–28
imitation 274; *see also* mimesis
"immanent criticism" (Benjamin) 149, 154
immoralism 397–99
In Advance of the Broken Arm (Duchamp) 606, 607–8, 612
incongruity theory of humor 427
"Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" (Merleau-Ponty) 134
individualism 239–40
inflection 601
Ingarden, Roman 126
Innis, Robert 102
"in principle possible" theory, photography 591
Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design, An (Hutcheson) 37–40
In Search of Lost Time (Proust) 150
inspiration, Plato on 8–10, 432–33
institutional theory of art 215, 220
institution of literature 523–24
Intellect 27
intentional definition of authenticity 456–58
intentionalism 310–15, 432; and depiction 369–71; and meaning 315–18; and style 448–49; theater 548
interactive art 568–71
internal sense 248
interpretation 205–7, 309–18; and conventionalism 315–16; and criticism 375–76; dance 651, 655; literature 527–28; painting 376–77; poetry 309–10, 311–12, 315–16; and style 444
interpretation/evaluation debate 174–77
intuition 106–8
Inwood, Michael 56–63
Ion (Plato) 8–9, 418
irony 316
irreality (Sartre) 129–30
Irvin, Sherri 606–14
"Is Art an Open Concept?" (Sibley) 197
Ishiguro, Kazuo, *The Remains of the Day* 344–45
Ive, Jonathan 616

Jacquette, D. 448
James, Henry 522
James, William 96, 97, 99, 100, 101, 103
Janaway, Christopher 3–12

Jencks, Charles 171
Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth (Ware) 576
John, Eileen 384–91
Johns, Jasper 577
Johnson, M. 355
Johnson, Samuel 510, 540–41
judgment theories 246–49, 305–6, 510, 513
Jules et Jim 150
Juliette (Sade) 401
justification 79

Kallen, Horace 101
kalon (Plato) 7
kalos 26
Kania, Andrew 242, 639–47
Kant, Immanuel 20, 67, 68, 72, 98, 139, 152, 153–54, 159–60, 161, 291, 502–3; on architecture 632, 635; on beauty 46–55, 56, 61, 248–49, 304, 433–34, 623, 635–36; categories of art 224; disinterestedness 30, 46–50, 396, 477, 485–86, 567; on genius 512–13; on humor 427; on nature 433–34; purposiveness 49, 554, 555–56; religious art 510–13, 514; subjectivity 506; on the sublime 51–52, 70–71; on taste 46–55, 246, 260–61, 263, 269, 283
Kapoor, Anish, *Cloud Gate* 611
Kaprow, Alan 101–2
katharsis (Aristotle) 14–17, 417, 418
Kelly, Thomas Forest 453
Kemp, Gary 109, 114
Kieran, Matthew 289–97, 388, 399
Kierkegaard, Søren 139
Kind Hearts and Coronets 402
King Lear (Shakespeare) 397
Kivy, Peter 195, 239, 241, 390, 408, 453, 455, 457, 460, 467, 536, 579, 645, 646
knowledge 337, 384; art as 385–90; and cognitivism 295–97, 389–90; construction of 391; and emotions 388–89
Koethe, J. 391
Komar, Vitaly 271
Koopman, Ton 453
Korsmeyer, Carolyn 257–65
Kracauer, Siegfried 139, 150
Kraut, Robert 236
Kreisler, Fritz 464
Kristeller, Paul Oskar 36, 474
Kulvicki, John 364, 368
Kunzle, David 580

Labov, William 343
Lacis, Asja 149–50
La divine commedia (Dante) 32
Laetz, Brian 231
Lakoff, G. 355
Lamarque, Peter 243, 292, 332, 342, 521–30, 532–41
Lamentation (Graham) 650
landscape 271, 357, 596
Landy, J. 391
Lang, B. 445
Langer, Susanne 356, 611–12, 642
language 201, 522–23, 628; Adorno on 138–39; attributive/predicative adjectives 196–97; Foucault on 163–64
Languages of Art (Goodman) 179–88, 254, 406, 466
Laocoön (Lessing) 556, 598
Las Niñas (Picasso) 437
Leavis, F.R. 527
Le Corbusier 619
Lectures on Fine Art (Hegel) 513
Leddy, T. 492
Lee, Harper, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 296
Lee, Spike 561
Leist, A. 391
Leonardo da Vinci 85, 475, 577; *Mona Lisa* 462, 469–70
Leopold, Aldo 490
Lepore, Ernie 537
Leskov, Nikolai 155
Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim 579; *Laocoön* 556, 598
Levin, Bernard 433
Levinson, André 88
Levinson, Jerrold 216–17, 239, 240, 241, 254, 295, 408, 467, 482–83, 639, 642–43, 646
Lewis, C. S. 527
Lewis, D. 335
LeWitt, Sol 468
light, beauty as 26–27, 28, 29, 31, 32–33
literature 32, 88, 521–30; cognitivism 337–38; fiction 330–38, 522, 524–26; interpretation 527–28; Merleau-Ponty 134–35; Sartre on 131; and style 449; and truth 526–27; and value 528–30, 579–80
LittleBig chair (Miller) 624
"Little History of Photography, A" (Benjamin) 152
Little Nemo in Slumberland (McCay) 576
Little Street, The (Vermeer) 296
Livingston, Paisley 340–47, 560, 561–62
Locke, Alain 96, 97, 98, 99–100
Locke, John 36–37, 39, 171, 353
Loos, Adolf 617–18

Lopes, Dominic McIver 227, 365, 366, 367, 389, 408, 568, 569, 570, 588–89, 592, 596–604, 610
Lord of the Flies (Golding) 295
Lorrain, Claude 357
Lowes, John Livingston 438
Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 540
Lukács, Georg 139
Lyas, Colin 190–98
Lyotard, Jean-François 163, 171
Lyrical Ballads (Wordsworth) 534

Mackail, J. W. 535
Mackie, John Leslie 343
Macpherson, James 464
Maddin, Guy 145
Madness and Civilization (Foucault) 161
Madonna of the Meadow, The (Bellini) 470
Magritte, René 166, *This is Not a Pipe* 162–63
Maimonides, Moses 27, 32
make-believe 320–21, 323, 331–32, 588
male gaze 504–6
Malick, Terrence 560
Manet, Édouard 164
"manifest properties" of art 228–33
Mann, Thomas 137
Manovich, Lev 568
Margolis, Joseph 102–3, 175–76
Marr, David 367
"Marseilles" (Benjamin) 151
Martin, F. David 608–9, 610–11
Martindale, Colin 270–71
Marx, Karl 139, 150
mass art 479
mass culture 139, 144–45, 293–94, 295, 575
Masters of American Comics 576–77
Matravers, Derek 200–208, 404–13, 642
Matthen, Mohan 278–87
Maus (Spiegelman) 576, 579
Maynard, Patrick 388, 588, 590
McCay, Winsor, *Little Nemo in Slumberland* 576
McCloud, Scott 580, 581
McConachie, Bruce 545
McDermott, John 102
McFee, Graham 649–57
Meager, R. 195
meaning: and fiction 336; and intentionalism 315–18; and interpretation 314–28
medieval aesthetics 25–34
medium specificity principles 225–33, 579
Melamid, Alexander 271
meliorism 100
Menard, Pierre, *Don Quixote* 443
Meninas, Las (Velázquez) 160–61
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice 123, 126, 127, 131–35, 560
Meskin, Aaron 442–50, 568, 571, 575–82, 591
messianic history (Benjamin) 155–56
metaontology 243
metaphor 258–61, 351–59, 406–7, 536–37
metaphysics, Nietzsche on 77–79
"method of indiscernibles" (Wollheim) 201–2
Meyer, C. F. 143
Meyer, Hannes 634
Michelangelo, *Pietà* 609
Middlemarch (Eliot) 397
Mill, John Stuart, *Utilitarianism* 482
Miller, Geoffrey 436
Miller, Jeff, LittleBig chair 624
mimesis 141, 415, 596–99, 603; Aristotle on 6, 17–19, 268–69, 415, 416–17, 418, 426; Plato on 4–6, 8, 17, 394
mind, Hegel on 57–60, 62, 63
mind independence of photographs 590–92
Minima Moralia (Adorno) 139
modernism 207–8; design 617–18; v. postmodernism 173–77
"Modest Proposal, A" (Swift) 316
"Moldau" (Smetana) 641
Mona Lisa (Leonardo) 462, 469–70
Mondrian, Piet 434; *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* 184, 444
monism/pluralism issue, interpretation 314
montage 555
Moore, Alan, *Watchmen* 576
Moore, Anne Elizabeth 580–81
Moore, G.E. 300
moralism 395, 400–402
Moralists, The (Shaftesbury) 619–20
morality 54, 61, 72, 80–82
Moran, R. 325
Morreall, J. 483
Morris, William 617
Mothersill, Mary 301
Motherwell, Robert 101
moving image *see* film
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus 433, 434–35; *Don Giovanni* 456
Muir, John 491
Mulvey, Laura 505
Munch, Edvard, *The Scream* 184
Murdoch, Iris 7, 337
music 15, 29, 31, 60, 62, 69, 88, 131, 138, 145, 544, 639–47; Adorno on 142–43; authenticity in 452–61; expression 408–13; fakes/forgeries 464, 465; formalism

644–46; Goodman on 183–84; and humor 429; ontology 646–47; religious 511–12, 516; resemblance theories 642–43; and value 289, 640–41
musica mundana (Boethius) 31
My Bed (Emin) 609
Myth of Sisyphus, The (Camus) 168

narrative 340–47; comics 581–82
narrative form 330–33
narrative persuasion 327
narrative theater 546–47
narrators, and narration 344–46
national flags 650
natural attitude (Husserl) 126
natural beauty 52–53
natural kind 224
"Natural Religion" (Hegel) 56–57
nature 29, 32–34, 73, 74, 433–34, 436; the sublime in 51–52, 70–71; *see also* environmental aesthetics
Negative Dialectics (Adorno) 142
Negro spirituals 100
Nehamas, A. 303
Neill, Alex 415–23
Neoplatonism 28–29, 30, 31, 37, 73, 74
Nettl, Bruno 475
Nevelson, Louise 606
Newman, Barnett 203
New Negro, The (Locke) 97
Newton, Isaac 39
Nietzsche, Friedrich 10, 21–22, 55, 77–85, 116, 121, 122, 138, 139, 145, 155, 160, 166, 172–73, 353–54; religious art 515–17, 518; on tragedy 421–22
Nochlin, Linda 501–2
nominalism 187–88, 240
nonaesthetics 192–93
non-art *see* high/low art distinction
nonfiction, and film 562
nonintentional general theory of art 449
nonnarrative theater 546–47
nonutilitarian pleasure 273
normativity 240
notation system, dance 649–50, 654–57
nothingness (Sartre) 129–30
Nous 27
novels *see* literature
Novitz, David 170–77, 479
Nussbaum, Martha 295, 389, 411, 423

Object (Oppenheim) 610
"object-presenting experiences", painting 597–99, 601–2
objects of desire *see* consumer goods
"Ode to Joy" (Schiller) 70
Odyssey (Homer) 4
Oedipus at Colonus (Sophocles) 420
Of Grammatology (Derrida) 174–75
"Of the Standard of Taste" (Hume) 40–44, 269, 305, 380
Olsen, Stein 292
On Christian Doctrine (Augustine) 32
One-Way Street (Benjamin) 151, 154
On Good and Evil (William of Auvergne) 32
On Music (Augustine) 29
Ono, Yoko 640
"On Some Motifs of Baudelaire" (Benjamin) 155
On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters (Schiller) 70, 71
"On the Beautiful and the Fitting" (Augustine) 28
"On the Concept of History" (Benjamin) 155–56
"On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening" (Adorno) 143
On the Genealogy of Morality (Nietzsche) 69
On the Musically Beautiful (Hanslick) 87
On the Naive and Sentimental in Literature (Schiller) 72–73
On the Nature of Things (Lucretius) 91
ontology 202, 235–43, 569–71; comics 580–81; Goodman on 185–86; music 646–47; sculpture 612–13
Oppenheim, Meret, *Object* 610
Order of Things, The (Foucault) 160–63, 163–64, 167
originality 197–98, 463–64
"Originality and Value" (Sibley) 197–98
originals, and historical authenticity 469–70
Origin of German Tragic Drama, The (Benjamin) 154
Origin of the German Mourning Play (Benjamin) 149
"Origin of the Work of Art, The" (Heidegger) 117–22
Othello (Shakespeare) 297
outsider art 225

Paedagogus (Clement of Alexandria) 27
pagan gods 83–84, 121
painting 60, 62, 131, 227–28, 596–604; Bell on 87–89; fakes/forgeries 462–63, 465; and feminism 504–6; Foucault on 160–63; Goodman on 184, 391; and humor 429; interpretation 376–77; Merleau-Ponty 134–35; and metaphor 356–57; and narrative 343, 345–46; and

style 444, 445; and value 597, 601, 603–4; Walton on 228–32; Wollheim on 202–4
Pair of Shoes (van Gogh) 119–20
pankalia 26
Panofsky, E. 444
Pappas, Nickolas 13–24
parallelism, painting 600–604, 603
paraphrase 536–37
Parental Admonition, The (Terborch) 182
"Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" (Benjamin) 155
Parker, Charlie 145
Parsons, Glenn 616–24
particularism 236–38
Parts of Animals (Aristotle) 21
pathêmatôn 14, 16
Paul, St 28
Peacocke, Christopher 366
Peirce, Charles 557, 585
perception 101, 131–33, 182, 193, 203
performance, videogames 571–73; *see also* acting; theater
performance theory 547
performance works 544, 545
Perkins, V. F. 558, 559
Phaedrus (Plato) 9–10
phantasmagoria (Benjamin) 152–53
phenomenology 116, 126–35; and depiction 366, 367
Phenomenology of Perception (Merleau-Ponty) 131–34
Phenomenology of Spirit (Hegel) 56, 165
Philips, D. M. 586
Philosophy Looks at the Arts (Tormey, ed.) 487
Philosophy of Horror, The (Carroll) 560
Philosophy of Mass Art (Carroll) 560
photography 151–53, 585–93; landscapes 271; and narrative 343; *see also* film
Picasso, Pablo 229–30, 292, 396, 437, 439, 597
pictures, fictional 333; representation 180–82, 363–71
Pierce, C. S. 96, 202
Pietà (Michelangelo) 609
Pillow, Kirk 468
Pinker, Steven 272, 281–82
pity, Aristotle on 14–17, 418
Plantinga, Carl 558, 560
Plato 26, 27, 29, 67, 88, 294, 432, 434, 502; on beauty 7–8; on catharsis 15–16; on emotions 15; on inspiration 8–10, 432–33; on mimesis 4–6, 8, 17, 394; on poetry 4–7, 9–11, 526; on truth 526–27
Platonic Academy, Florence 27
Platonic Ideas 68–69
play 282–83
play drive (Schiller) 71, 72
Plaza Major, Madrid 634
pleasure 291–94; in beauty 46–50, 304–5; nonutilitarian 273
plot, Aristotle on 18–19
Plotinus 27, 33
pluralism 480–81, 602–3; *see also* monism/pluralism issue, interpretation
Pocci, L. 390
Poetics (Aristotle) 6, 13–22, 268, 337, 351, 380, 415, 416–17, 418
poetry 32, 60, 63, 131, 510, 522, 532–41; Aristotle on 13–22, 336, 380, 526, 533–34; Heidegger on 122–23; interpretation 309–10, 311–12, 315–16; Plato on 4–7, 9–11, 526; and truth 540; and value 538–41
Pointillists 439
politics, Aristotle on 20, 21–22
Politics (Aristotle) 14, 15, 268
Pollock, Jackson 101, 434
Pope, Alexander, *Essay on Man* 533–34, 540
Popper, Karl 433
popular aesthetic 477
popular art 479
populism 480
pornography 284
Porphyrios, Demitri 630
portraiture, photography 592–93
positive aesthetics 490
postmodernism 170–77; design 618–19; v. modernism 173–77
Postrel, Virginia 617, 619, 620, 622
post-structuralism 628
Pound, Ezra 395, 527
Poussin, Nicolas, *Achilles among the Daughters of Lycomedes* 88
pragmatism 96–103
Pratt, Henry 580, 581
Predelli, S. 241
predicative/attributive adjectives 196–97
prescribed changes 569
primacy of art 98–99
Principles of Art (Collingwood) 109–14, 517
Principles of Psychology (James) 97
proceduralism 215–16
projection 200–201, 405–6
prolepsis 346–47
"proper aim" issue, intentionalism 312–13
properties of artworks 476–77
prose 61
Protagoras (Plato) 4
pro tanto principle 398–99
prototype theory of art 214–15

Proust, Marcel 141
Pseudo-Dionysius 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34
psychical discipline 503–4
psychology, empirical 269–73; *see also* perception
psychoticism 435
public art 257, 265, 613, 636–37
Purcell, Henry, *Dido and Aeneas* 184
purposiveness (Kant) 49, 554, 555–56

quality 470–71
Quintilian 351–52

Radiohead, "We Suck Young Blood" 641, 642
Rainer, Yvonne, *Room Service* 652–53
Ramachandran, V. S. 282
Ransom, John Crowe 527
Rape of Europa (Rubens) 464
Rape of Europa (Titian) 464
rationalist aesthetic theory 247
rationality 171
Read, Herbert 610
realism, photography 586–90
reality/appearance distinction 78, 79
recognitional theory of depiction 366–67
Red Dead Redemption 565–66, 567, 568, 569, 570, 572–73
reductionism 528
reductivism, metaphor 351–53
relativism, v. universalism 274–75
release of tension through humor theory 428
reliability of art 386–88
religion 59–60
"Religion of Beauty, The" (Hegel) 57
religious architecture 509, 511–12
religious art 59–60, 61, 280, 509–18
religious rituals 517–18
Remains of the Day, The (Ishiguro) 344–45
Renaissance theater 227
Renfrew, Colin 279–80
representation 123, 141, 340–41, 557, 582, 631; Goodman on 187–88; photography 586–90; pictures 180–82, 363–71; Schopenhauer on 67–68, 69, 77–78; *see also* mimesis
Republic (Plato) 3–7, 8, 10, 14, 16, 17, 18, 26, 69, 386, 394, 418, 502
resemblance theories: depiction 364–65, 367, 369–71, 408, 412–13; music 642–43
response argument, ethics 401
response-dependent theories 305–6, 410
"Revealed Religion" (Hegel) 57
Rhetoric (Aristotle) 21, 416
Ribeiro, A. C. 535
Ribot, Theodule 547
Richards, I. A. 353, 523, 527
Ricoeur, Paul 355–56
Ridley, Aaron 77–85, 236
Riefenstahl, Leni, *Triumph of the Will* 381, 394–95, 396, 398
Riegl, Alois 87, 153
Rietveld, Gerrit 629
Robbers, The (Schiller) 70
Robert Crumb: A Chronicle of Modern Times 576
Robinson, Jenefer 179–88, 388, 389, 411, 449
Robson, Jon 568, 571
Rochlitz, Rainer 154
Rohrbaugh, Guy 235–43
Romanticism 59, 66, 70, 71, 73, 434
Room of One's Own, A (Woolf) 502
Room Service (Rainer) 652–53
Rorty, Richard 102–3, 356
Ross, W. D. 195
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 165
Rowe, M. W. 293
Rubens, *Rape of Europa* 464
Rudall, Nicholas 425
Ruskin, John 380, 434, 617, 630
Russell, Bertrand 338, 521

Sabine, George 191
Sacco, Joe, *Safe Area: Goražde* 578
Sade, Marquis de 165; *Juliette* 401
Safe Area: Goražde (Sacco) 578
Saito, Y. 492
Salon des Refusés 437
San Carlo alle Quattrofontane (Borromini) 631
Sander, August 152
Sarraz Declaration, La (CIAM) 633–34
Sartre, Jean-Paul 126, 127–31, 138, 141, 161; on *Guernica* (Picasso) 131
Sartwell, Crispin 102
Saussure, Ferdinand de 162
Savedoff, Barbara 591, 592
Savile, A. 197
Schaffer, Peter, *Amadeus* 433; *Equus* 237
Schaper, Eva 196
Schapiro, M. 445, 450
Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von 56, 66, 67, 73–74
Schier, Flint 367
Schiller, Friedrich von 55, 66, 67, 69–73, 267
Schlegel, Friedrich 59–60, 154, 156
Schoenberg, Arnold 138, 139, 140, 231, 439, 655
Scholem, Gerhard (Gershom) 148, 149, 150

Schopenhauer, Arthur 55, 66, 71, 72, 77, 116, 249, 422, 645–46; on idealism 67–69; on representation 67–68, 69, 77–78; on tragedy 420–21
Science of Logic (Hegel) 57, 62
Scream, The (Munch) 184
"Scrutiny Thesis" (Wollheim) 206, 462, 465
Scruton, Roger 195, 197, 239, 303, 410–11, 634, 636; elitism 481; on film 554, 557–58; music 639–40
photography 585, 588, 589, 590, 593;
sculpture 60, 230, 606–14; ontology of 612–13; site specific 613–14
"seeing-as" 129
"seeing-in" 129, 601, 608
self, Foucault on 164–67
self-knowledge 57, 62, 388
self-regarding, art as 284–85
self-stylization 82–85
semantic density, poetry 540
semantic theory 406–7, 629, 631–32
semiotics 558
senses 38–39, 40
sensibility 54
sensibility group 305–6
sentimentalism 72–73
Sepänmaa, Y. 492
seriousness, Aristotle on 19–20
sexual attraction 283
sexually adaptive, art as 286–87
Shadowtime 156
Shaftesbury, 3rd Earl of 36–37, 247, 619–20
Shakespeare, William 60, 295, 352, 423, 522, 544
Shapiro, Meyer 119
Shelley, James 36–45
Shelley, Percy Bysshe 526, 534–35, 541
Shklovsky, Viktor 559
Shostakovich, Dmitri 138
Shusterman, Richard 96–103, 480, 593
Sibley, Frank 190–98, 254, 261
"sick rose, The" (Blake) 309–10, 311–12, 315–16
Sidney, Sir Philip 3, 540
significant form 86–94, 213–14, 267, 396
simile 351–52
Singer, P. 391
Sircello, Guy 300–301, 405, 406
Smetana, "Moldau" 641
Smith, Adam 417
Smith, Murray 554–63
Smuts, Aaron 569
sociobiological theories of value 198
sociocultural context 437
somatic naturalism 97–98
Sophocles 56, 122, 419–20, 522, 526
spandrel theory 281, 283–84, 286
special focus 274
speech act 331
Spencer, Herbert 428
Spiegelman, Art: *Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!* 579; *Maus* 576, 579
Spinoza, Baruch 73–74
spoudaioi (Aristotle) 19–20
Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles (Derrida) 167
Stalnaker, Nan 462–71
Stanislavsky, Constantin 547
Starck, Phillipe 616
Stecker, Robert 219–20, 243, 290, 309–18
"Steerage, The" (Stieglitz) 237
Steinberg, Josef von, *The Docks of New York* 556
Stieglitz, Alfred, "The Steerage" 237
stimulus-response theory, theater 547
Stolnitz, Jerome 250
story-consistent belief 327
"Storyteller, The" (Benjamin) 155
Stravinsky, Igor 138
Strawson, Peter 195, 240
Stromata (Clement of Alexandria) 26–27
Stroud, Scott 102
structuralism 523, 628
structural theory of depiction 363–64, 432
style 207, 273, 442–50; Nietzsche on 82–85
sublime, Kant on 51–52, 70–71
Substance of Style, The (Postrel) 619
suffering 68, 83
Suger, Abbot of St Denis 31
Suits, Bernard 285
Summa Theologiae (Aquinas) 30, 33
Summa theologica Alexandri (Alexander of Hales) 32
Summers, David 357–58
Summer with Monika 561
superiority theory of humor 427–28, 429
Supper at Emmaus, The (van Meegeren) 464
Swift, Jonathan, "A Modest Proposal" 316
symbol systems (Goodman) 179–80, 184, 187, 389
Symposium (Plato) 7–8, 27
S/Z (Barthes) 174, 175

taste 37, 247, 257–65, 280, 284; Hume on 40–44, 259–60, 262, 269, 280, 305, 380, 506; Kant on 46–55, 246, 260–61, 263, 269, 283
Tate, Allen 527
Tavinor, Grant 565–73
technê (Plato) 9, 418

technique definition of authenticity 458–59
television 6
Telfer, Elizabeth 578
templates, videogames 570–71
Tenniel, John, *Alice in Wonderland* 582
Terborch, Gerard, *The Parental Admonition* 182
Tertullian 26
text-performance relationship, theater 545–46, 549–50
theater 324, 543–52; and audience 550–51; classical paradigm 544–45; spaces of performance 551–52; text-performance relationship 545–46, 549–50
Theodosius the Great 26
Theory of the Leisure Class, The (Veblen) 620
thing-in-itself 67–68, 73
Third Man, The (Greene) 333
This is Not a Pipe (Magritte) 162–63, 166
Thom, Paul 544
Thomasson, Amie 243
Thompson, Judith Jarvis 612
Thompson, Kristin 558, 559
Thus Spoke Zarathustra (Nietzsche) 167
Tieck, Johann Ludwig 74
Titian, *Rape of Europa* 464
To Kill a Mockingbird (Lee) 296
Tolstoy, Leo 110, 184, 267, 400, 404–5
Tormey, Alan 405, 407
tragedy 10–11, 13–22, 415–23
transcendental philosophy 28–29, 50, 67, 69, 79
"transfiguration" of movement 652–53
Transfiguration of the Commonplace, The (Danto) 616
transparency, photography 586–90
"Transparent Pictures. On the Nature of Photographic Realism" (Walton) 587–88
transportation, imagination 327–28
Treatise (Hume) 525, 526
Triumph of the Will (Riefenstahl) 381, 394–95, 396, 398
truth 123, 171, 385–86; in fiction 333–37; Heidegger on 118, 119, 122; in literature 526–27; Plato on 526–27; and poetry 540
"truth content" 139
Turner, M. 355
Twilight of the Idols (Nietzsche) 78
twofoldness, painting 601–2, 608
type/token distinction 96, 202, 240, 650–51

Unforgiven 568, 570, 573
uniformity 39–40
universalism 267–75, 278–79; v. relativism 274–75
universality thesis (Kant) 47–48, 50
Urban Landscapes (Wang) 609
Utilitarianism (Mill) 482
utterance 314–15, 331–32, 340, 369–70

value-maximizing theory, interpretation 313, 317, 378–79
value/valuation of art 186–87, 198, 247, 249, 289–97, 377–82, 390, 396, 432, 434; comics 578–80; consumer goods 620–22; dance 653–54, 657; high/low art distinction 478–79, 480–83; literature 528–30, 579–80; music 289, 640–41; and narrative 346–47; painting 597, 601, 603–4; poetry 538–41; and style 444–46; Wollheim on 202, 205–7
Vance, Robert D. 610
van der Weyden, Roger, *The Vision of the Three Magi* 444
Van Doren, Harold 622–23
Van Gogh, Vincent 114, 119–20, 122, 123, 143
van Meegeren, Han 465, 466; *The Supper at Emmaus* 464
variety 39–40
Veblen, Thorstein 621; *The Theory of the Leisure Class* 620
Velázquez, *Las Meninas* 160–61
Venturi, Robert 619
Verdi, Giuseppe 70
Vermeer, Jan 445, 465, 466; *The Little Street* 296
verse *see* poetry
videogames 565–73
Viollet-le-Duc 632–33
virtuosity 273
Vision of the Three Magi, The (van der Weyden) 444
Vitruvius 627, 630
Vivant (Merleau-Ponty) 131–32
Voices of Silence (Malraux) 134
Voltaire 259

Wachman, Eshkol 654
Wagner, Richard 69, 122, 422
Walton, Kendall 228–32, 239, 294, 320–21, 325, 408–9, 448, 449, 572, 585, 587–88
Wang, Zhan, *Urban Landscapes* 609
Warburton, Nigel 591–92
Ware, Chris, *Jimmy Corrigan: the Smartest Kid on Earth* 576
Warhol, Andy, *Brillo Boxes* 123, 253
Wartenberg, Thomas E. 116–24, 560, 582
"Waste Land, The" (Eliot) 113
Watchmen (Moore) 576

Waugh, Evelyn 292
Ways of Seeing (Berger) 504–5
Ways of Worldmaking (Goodman) 187
Weber, Max 509
Weeping Woman (Picasso) 292
Weitz, Morris 92, 214
"We Suck Young Blood" (Radiohead) 641, 642
"What is an Author?" (Foucault) 166
What is Art? (Tolstoy) 106, 396
What is Literature? (Sartre) 131
Whiteman, Paul 145
Wicks, Robert 159–68
Wilde, Oscar 425
Will (Schopenhauer) 67–69, 77, 78, 420, 422
Willats, John 367
William of Auvergne 32
Williams, B. 423
Williams, Drid 651
Wilson, Dawn M. 585–93
Wimsatt, W. K. Jr 522, 527
Wind, F. 63
Winters, Edward 627–37
Wittgenstein, Ludwig 92, 116, 190, 201, 203, 356, 524, 636
Wizard of Oz, The 572, 573
Wolfflin, Heinrich 87
Wollheim, Richard 129, 182, 197, 200–208, 237, 324–25, 405, 601, 602, 608; on *Doge of Venice* 204; fakes/forgeries 462, 463; on style 443, 446–47, 448–49
Wolterstorff, N. 240, 241
Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own* 502
Wordsworth, William, *Lyrical Ballads* 534
work-meaning issue, interpretation 314–15
"Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (Benjamin) 151–52
work performances 544, 545
World as Will and Representation, The (Schopenhauer) 67–69, 249, 250
writing, Barthes on 175; *see also* authorship
Wyneken, Gustav 149

Xenophanes 63

Young, James O. 452–61
Youngerman, Suzanne 655
Yutkevich, Sergei 555

Zamir, T. 390
Zangwill, Nick 215, 301
Zuckert, Rachel 611

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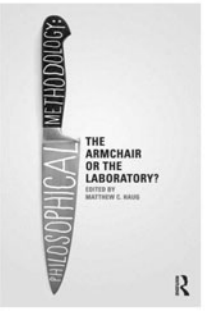

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